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REPLY TO Wilmington Office

June 2, 2008

VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

Magistrate Judge Mary Pat Thynge
J. Caleb Boggs Federal Building
844 N. King Street
Wilmington, Delaware 19801

Re: *Parker-Hannifin Corporation v. Seiren Co., Ltd.*, C.A. No. 07-104-MPT
Parker-Hannifin Corporation v. Zippertubing (JAPAN), Ltd., C.A. No. 06-751-MPT
Joint Claim Construction Chart

Dear Judge Thynge:

I write on behalf of Parker-Hannifin Corporation and with the authorization of counsel for Seiren Co., Ltd. and counsel for Zippertubing (JAPAN), Ltd. This letter is being submitted in accordance with the April 25, 2008 Scheduling Orders currently in place for each of the above-referenced matters.

The parties have conferred regarding their proposed claim constructions and jointly submit the attached Joint Claim Construction Chart. To that end, each party reserves the right to add citations to the intrinsic and extrinsic record at a later date.

If Your Honor has any questions, please do not hesitate to let us know. Thanking you in advance for you attention to the foregoing, I am

Very truly yours,

Francis DiGiovanni

SN/el

cc: Clerk of Court (via Electronic Filing)
John P. Pegram
William J. Marsden, Jr.
Scott M. Daniels
Julia Heaney

614679v1

Claim No.	Claim Element	Parker's Proposed Construction	ZTJ and Seiren's Proposed Construction
'348 claim 1	a resilient core member **which is not V-0 rated** under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94	The core member would not be accorded a V-0 rating under UL Standard No. 94 were the core member to be submitted to UL for testing. (*e.g.* '348 Patent 2:64-3:2; 7:49-53.)	The core member has not received a V-0 rating under Underwriter's Laboratories UL Standard No. 94. (*e.g.* '348 Patent 10:52-53; 11:1-3; '348 Pros. Hist. – 11/13/02 Response and Amendment, pp. 4-5.) To the extent that "V"-type ratings were not available for such core members at the time the relevant patent application was filed, Seiren and ZTJ reserve the right to argue that this claim term is indefinite under 35 U.S.C. § 112.
	at least the **exterior surface** being electrically-conductive	Plain and ordinary meaning applies, consistent with the specification. The exteriorly facing surface of the referenced article. (*e.g.* '348 Patent 4:64-66; 7:67-8:2; Figs. 4-5, Element 64.)	The outer face, outside or exterior boundary of the fabric member. (*e.g.* '348 Patent Fig. 2; 5:42-53; 10:62-63.)
	the exterior surface defining with the interior surface a **thickness dimension** of the fabric member therebetween;	The distance between the exterior surface (as defined above) and the interior surface of the fabric member. (*e.g.* '348 Patent claim 1, 10:63-65.)	The dimension represented by "t_1" in Fig. 2. (*e.g.* '348 Patent Fig. 2; 6:35-44; 10:63-65.)
	and a flame retardant layer **coating at least a portion of the interior**	Plain and ordinary meaning applies, consistent with the specification. A	The flame retardant layer is directly applied to the interior surface of the

	surface of said fabric member,	layer having flame retardant properties covers at least a portion or the entirety of the interior surface of the fabric member. (*e.g.* '348 Patent 3:35-49; 6:35-38.)	fabric member, covering at least a portion of that interior surface. (*e.g.* '348 Patent Fig. 2; Fig. 5; Fig 6; 3:34-36; 8:59-9:2; 9:34-41 and 60-64; 10:8-11.)
	said flame retardant layer **being effective to afford said gasket a flame class rating of V-0** under Underwriters Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94	Plain and ordinary meaning applies, consistent with the specification. A layer having flame retardant properties provides the overall gasket, in which the layer is found, with flame retardant properties that are sufficient so that the gasket has been accorded a V-0 rating by UL after testing for flammability under UL Standard No. 94. (*e.g.* '348 Patent 2:46-61; 10:20-27; 10:36-40.)	The gasket would receive a V-0 rating if it were tested according to Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94. (*e.g.* '348 Patent 11:1-3; '348 Pros. Hist. – 11/13/02 Response and Amendment, pp. 4-5.)
	penetrating into said fabric member to a depth which is less than the thickness dimension of said fabric member such that the exterior surface of said fabric member remains electrically conductive.	Plain and ordinary meaning applies, consistent with the specification. The coating enters into the fabric to a depth which is between the interior surface and the exterior surface such that the electrical conductivity of the exterior surface is not appreciably affected. (*e.g.* '348 Patent 3:39-44; 6:44-47.)	The flame retardant layer does not penetrate the fabric member to an extent that would cause the exterior surface of the fabric member to have a surface resistivity greater than about 0.1 Ω/sq. (*e.g.* '348 Patent 5:42-53; 11:3-7.)
'348 claim 8	at least the **exterior surface** being electrically-conductive	Same as above.	Same as above.

	the exterior surface defining with the interior surface a **thickness dimension** of the fabric member therebetween;	Same as above.	Same as above.
	and a flame retardant layer **coating at least a portion of the interior surface** of said fabric member,	Same as above.	Same as above.
	said flame retardant layer comprising **between about 30-50% by weight** of one or more flame retardant additives	The flame retardant layer when applied contains between about 30% and about 50% of flame retardant additives. (*e.g.* '348 Patent 6:35-38; 6:60-68.)	Indefinite under 35 U.S.C. § 112. (*See, e.g.*, '095 Pros. Hist. – 3/10/04 Prelim. Amendment, p. 4.)
	penetrating into said fabric member to a depth which is less than the thickness dimension of said fabric member such that the exterior surface of said fabric member remains electrically conductive.	Same as above.	Same as above.
'348 claim 15	said flame retardant layer **is effective to afford the gasket a flame class rating of V-0** under Underwriters Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94	Same as above.	Same as above.
'348 claim 16	said core member **is not V-0 rated** under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94	Same as above.	Same as above.

'348 claim 17	said core member **is not V-0 rated** under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94	Same as above.	Same as above.
'536 claim 1	at least the **exterior surface** being electrically-conductive	Same as above.	Same as above.
	the exterior surface defining with the interior surface a **thickness dimension** of the fabric member therebetween;	Same as above.	Same as above.
	a flame retardant layer **coating at least a portion of the interior surface** of said fabric member,	Same as above.	Same as above.
	at least about 30% by weight	The flame retardant layer when applied contains at least about 30% of flame retardant additives. (*e.g.* '536 Patent 6:37-40; 6:62-7:2.)	Indefinite under 35 U.S.C. § 112. (see above).
	penetrating into said fabric member to a depth which is less than the thickness dimension of said fabric member such that the exterior surface of said fabric member remains electrically conductive.	Same as above.	Same as above.
'536 claim 8	flame retardant layer **is effective to**	Same as above.	Same as above.

	afford the gasket a flame class rating of V-0 under Underwriters Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94		
'095 claim 1	at least the **exterior surface** being electrically-conductive	Same as above.	Same as above.
	the exterior surface defining with the interior surface a **thickness dimension** of the fabric member therebetween;	Same as above.	Same as above.
	a flame retardant layer **coating at least a portion of the interior surface** of said fabric member,	Same as above.	Same as above.
	at least about 50% by dry weight	The flame retardant layer when dried or otherwise hardened contains at least about 50% of flame retardant additives. (*e.g.* '095 Patent 6:65-7:11; 9:63-64; '095 Pros. Hist. – 3/10/04 Prelim. Amendment, p. 4, ¶¶ 4-5.)	Indefinite under 35 U.S.C. § 112. (see above).
'095 claim 8	flame retardant layer **is effective to afford the gasket a flame class rating of V-0** under Underwriters Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94.	Same as above.	Same as above.

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(12) **United States Patent**
Bunyan et al.

(10) **Patent No.: US 6,521,348 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent: *Feb. 18, 2003**

(54) **FLAME RETARDANT EMI SHIELDING GASKET**

(75) Inventors: **Michael H. Bunyan**, Chelmsford, MA (US); **William I. Flanders**, Merimack, NH (US)

(73) Assignee: **Parker-Hannifin Corp.**, Cleveland, OH (US)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

(21) Appl. No.: **10/142,803**

(22) Filed: **May 9, 2002**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2002/0125026 A1 Sep. 12, 2002

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation of application No. 09/883,785, filed on Jun. 18, 2001, now Pat. No. 6,387,523, which is a continuation of application No. 09/250,338, filed on Feb. 16, 1999, now Pat. No. 6,428,393.

(60) Provisional application No. 60/076,370, filed on Feb. 27, 1998.

(51) **Int. Cl.**[7] **B32B 5/14**; B32B 5/18; H05K 9/00

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **428/457**; 361/818

(58) **Field of Search** 427/77; 361/818; 428/457

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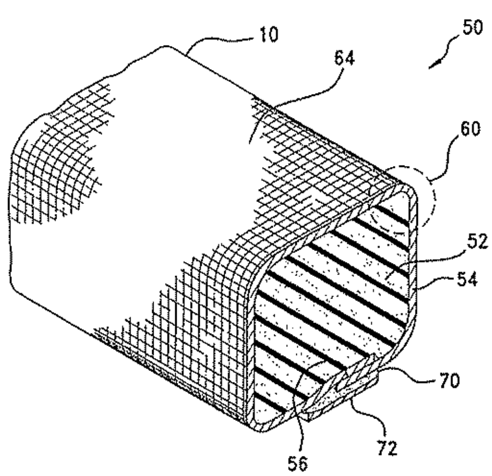
(List continued on next page.)

Primary Examiner—Erma Cameron
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—John A. Molnar, Jr.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A flame retardant, electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielding gasket construction. The construction includes a resilient core member formed of a foamed elastomeric material, an electrically-conductive fabric member surrounding the outer surface of the core member, and a flame retardant layer coating at least a portion of the interior surface of the fabric member. The flame retardant layer is effective to afford the gasket construction with a flame class rating of V-0 under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94.

18 Claims, 3 Drawing Sheets



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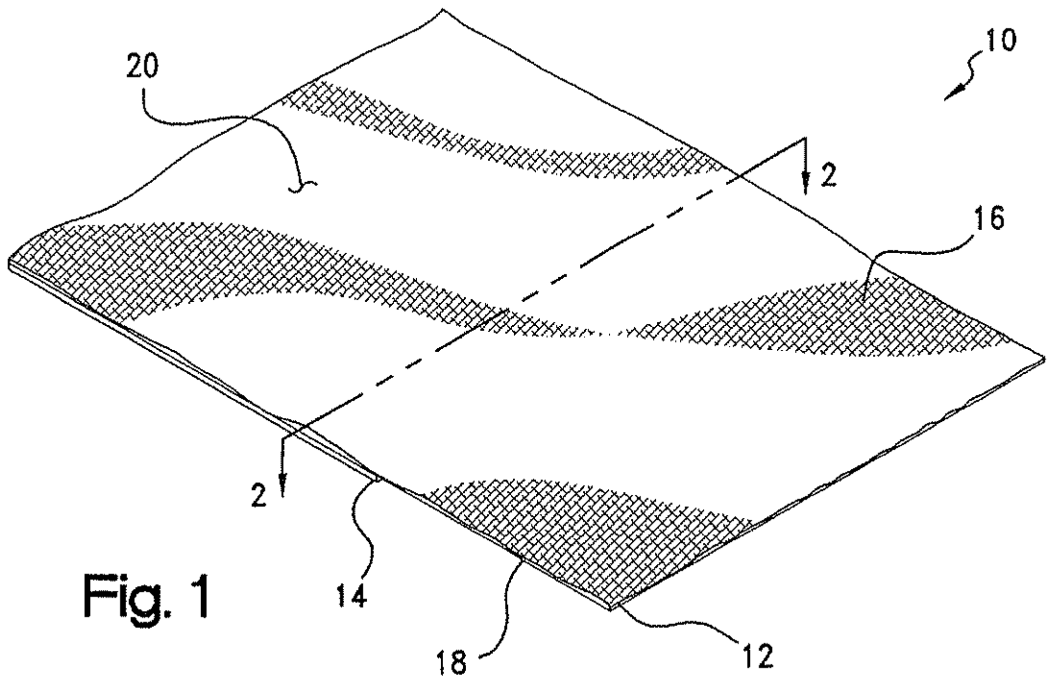

Fig. 1

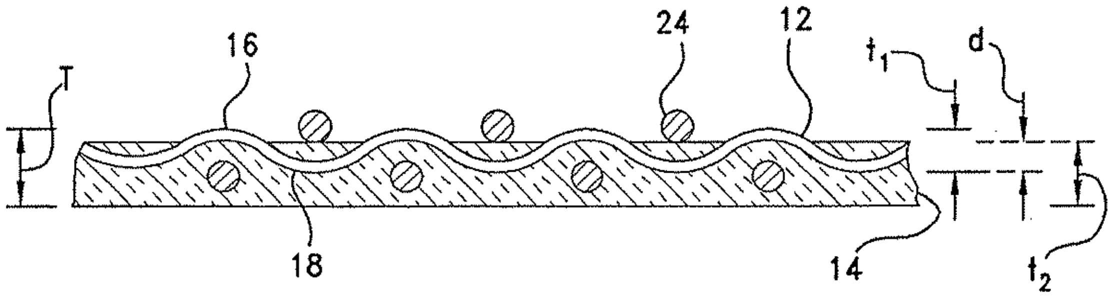

Fig. 2

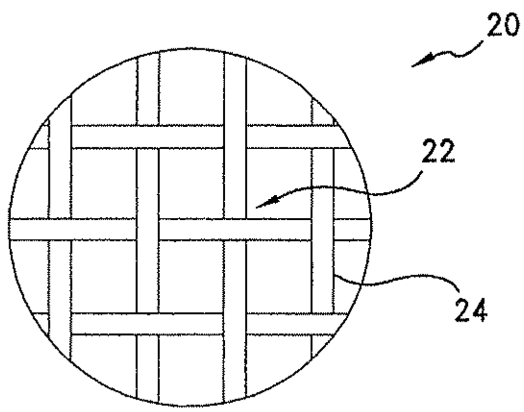

Fig. 3

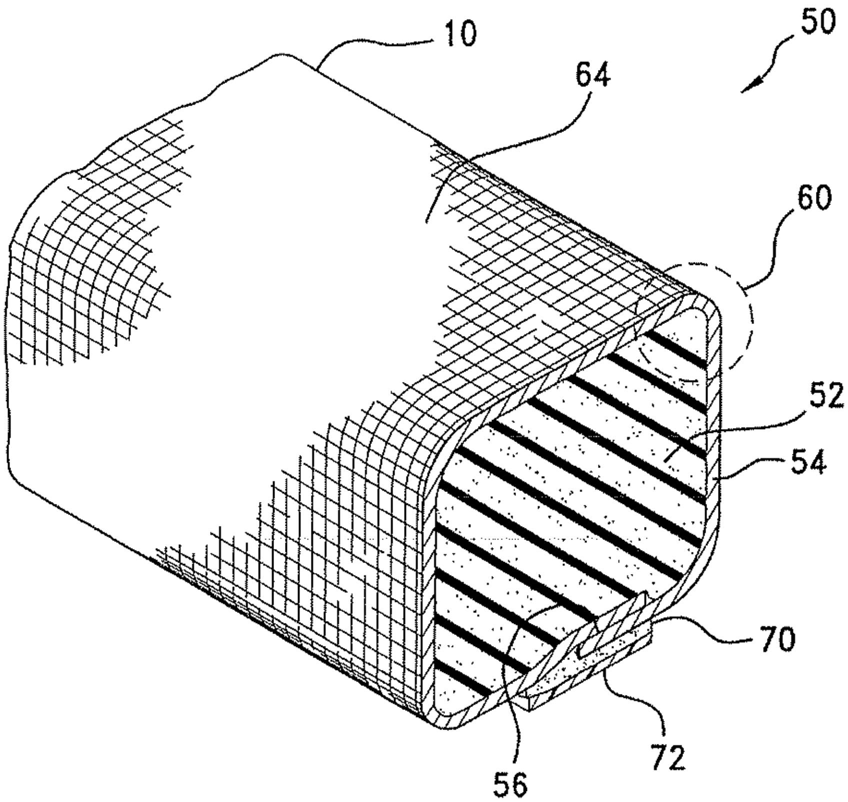

Fig. 4

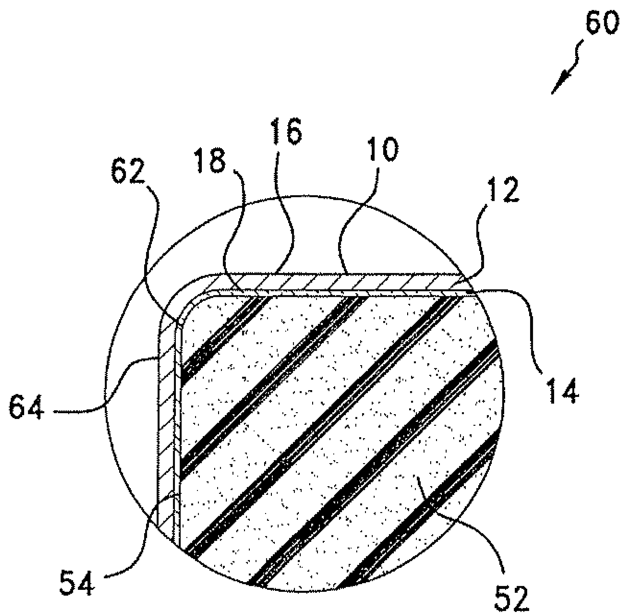

Fig. 5

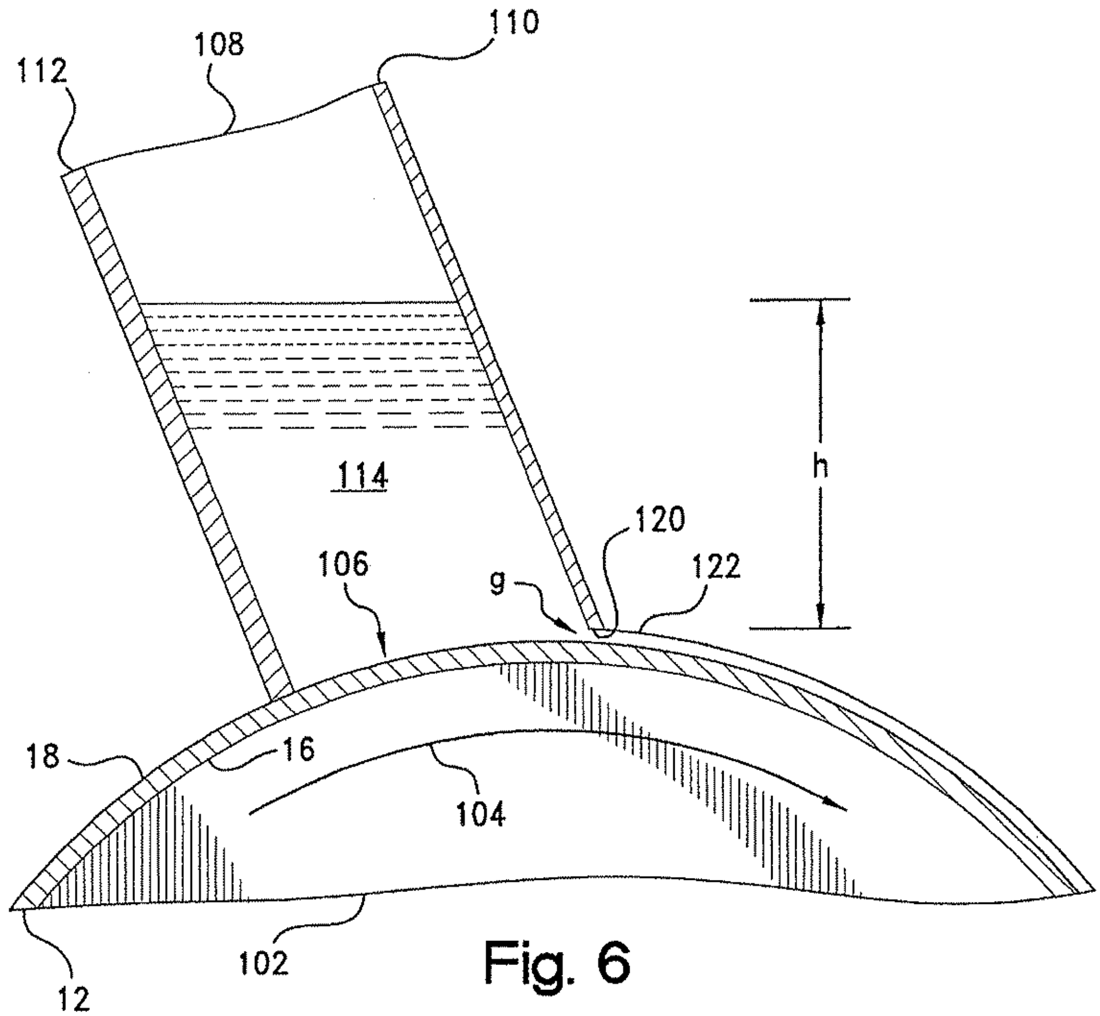

Fig. 6

FLAME RETARDANT EMI SHIELDING GASKET

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 09/883,785, filed Jun. 18, 2001, which application is to issue as U.S. Pat. No. 6,387,523; which is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 09/250,338, filed Feb. 16, 1999, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,428,393 and claiming priority to U.S. provisional application Serial No. 60/076,370, filed Feb. 27, 1998, the disclosure of each of which is expressly incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates broadly to electrically-conductive, flame retardant materials for use in electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielding, and to a method of manufacturing the same, and more particularly to an electrically-conductive fabric having a layer of a flame retardant coating applied to one surface thereof for use as a sheathing within an EMI shielding gasket.

The operation of electronic devices including televisions, radios, computers, medical instruments, business machines, communications equipment, and the like is attended by the generation of electromagnetic radiation within the electronic circuitry of the equipment. Such radiation often develops as a field or as transients within the radio frequency band of the electromagnetic spectrum, i.e., between about 10 KHz and 10 GHz, and is termed "electromagnetic interference" or "EMI" as being known to interfere with the operation of other proximate electronic devices.

To attenuate EMI effects, shielding having the capability of absorbing and/or reflecting EMI energy may be employed both to confine the EMI energy within a source device, and to insulate that device or other "target" devices from other source devices. Such shielding is provided as a barrier which is inserted between the source and the other devices, and typically is configured as an electrically conductive and grounded housing which encloses the device. As the circuitry of the device generally must remain accessible for servicing or the like, most housings are provided with openable or removable accesses such as doors, hatches, panels, or covers. Between even the flattest of these accesses and its corresponding mating or faying surface, however, there may be present gaps which reduce the efficiency of the shielding by presenting openings through which radiant energy may leak or otherwise pass into or out of the device. Moreover, such gaps represent discontinuities in the surface and ground conductivity of the housing or other shielding, and may even generate a secondary source of EMI radiation by functioning as a form of slot antenna. In this regard, bulk or surface currents induced within the housing develop voltage gradients across any interface gaps in the shielding, which gaps thereby function as antennas which radiate EMI noise. In general, the amplitude of the noise is proportional to the gap length, with the width of the gap having a less appreciable effect.

For filling gaps within mating surfaces of housings and other EMI shielding structures, gaskets and other seals have been proposed both for maintaining electrical continuity across the structure, and for excluding from the interior of the device such contaminates as moisture and dust. Such seals are bonded or mechanically attached to, or press-fit into, one of the mating surfaces, and function to close any interface gaps to establish a continuous conductive path

thereacross by conforming under an applied pressure to irregularities between the surfaces. Accordingly, seals intended for EMI shielding applications are specified to be of a construction which not only provides electrical surface conductivity even while under compression, but which also has a resiliency allowing the seals to conform to the size of the gap. The seals additionally must be wear resistant, economical to manufacture, and capability of withstanding repeated compression and relaxation cycles. For further information on specifications for EMI shielding gaskets, reference may be had to Severinsen, J., "Gaskets That Block EMI," Machine Design, Vol. 47, No. 19, pp. 74–77 (Aug. 7, 1975).

Requirements for typical EMI shielding applications often dictate a low impedance, low profile gasket which is deflectable under normal closure force loads. Other requirements include low cost and a design which provides an EMI shielding effectiveness for both the proper operation of the device and compliance, in the United States, with commercial Federal Communication Commission (FCC) EMC regulations.

A particularly economical gasket construction, which also requires very low closure forces, i.e. less than about 1 lb/inch (0.175 N/mm), is marketed by the Chomerics Division of Parker-Hannifin Corp., Woburn, Mass. under the tradename "Soft-Shield® 5000 Series." Such construction consists of an electrically-conductive jacket or sheathing which is "cigarette" wrapped lengthwise over a polyurethane or other foam core. As is described further in U.S. Pat. No. 4,871,477, polyurethane foams generally are produced by the reaction of polyisocyanate and a hydroxyl-functional polyol in the presence of a blowing agent. The blowing agent effects the expansion of the polymer structure into a multiplicity of open or closed cells.

The jacket is provided as a highly conductive, i.e., about 1 Ω-sq., nickel-plated-silver, woven rip-stop nylon which is self-terminating when cut. Advantageously, the jacket may be bonded to the core in a continuous molding process wherein the foam is blown or expanded within the jacket as the jacket is wrapped around the expanding foam and the foam and jacket are passed through a die and into a traveling molding. Similar gasket constructions are shown in commonly-assigned U.S. Pat. No. 5,028,739 and in U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,857,668; 5,054,635; 5,105,056; and 5,202,536.

Many electronic devices, including PC's and communication equipment, must not only comply with certain FCC requirements, but also must meet be approved under certain Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) standards for flame retardancy. In this regard, if each of the individual components within an electronic device is UL approved, then the device itself does not require separate approval. Ensuring UL approval for each component therefore reduces the cost of compliance for the manufacturer, and ultimately may result in cheaper goods for the consumer. For EMI shielding gaskets, however, such gaskets must be made flame retardant, i.e., achieving a rating of V-0 under UL Std. No. 94, "Tests for Flammability of Plastic Materials for Parts in Devices and Appliances" (1991), without compromising the electrical conductivity necessary for meeting EMI shielding requirements.

In this regard, and particularly with respect to EMI shielding gaskets of the above-described fabric over foam variety, it has long been recognized that foamed polymeric materials are flammable and, in certain circumstances, may present a fire hazard. Owing to their cellular structure, high organic content, and surface area, most foam materials are

subject to relatively rapid decomposition upon exposure to fire or high temperatures.

One approach for imparting flame retardancy to fabric over foam gaskets has been to employ the sheathing as a flame resistant protective layer for the foam. Indeed, V-0 rating compliance purportedly has been achieved by sheathing the foam within an electrically-conductive Ni/Cu-plated fabric to which a thermoplastic sheet is hot nipped or otherwise fusion bonding to the underside thereof. Such fabrics, which may be further described in one or more of U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,489,126; 4,531,994; 4,608,104; and/or 4,621,013, have been marketed by Monsanto Co., St. Louis, under the tradename "Flectron® Ni/Cu Polyester Taffeta V0."

Other fabric over foam gaskets, as is detailed in U.S. Pat. No. 4,857,668, incorporate a supplemental layer or coating applied to the interior surface of the sheath. Such coating may be a flame-retardant urethane formulation which also promotes the adhesion of the sheath to the foam. The coating additionally may function to reduce bleeding of the foam through the fabric which otherwise could compromise the electrical conductivity of the sheath.

In view of the foregoing, it will be appreciated that further improvements in the design of flame retardant, fabric-over foam EMI shielding gaskets, as well as sheathing materials therefore, would be well-received by the electronics industry. Especially desired would be a flame retardant gasket construction which achieves a UL94 rating of V-0.

BROAD STATEMENT OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to an electrically-conductive, flame retardant material for use in fabric-over-foam EMI shielding gaskets, and to a method of manufacturing the same. In having a layer of a flame retardant coating applied to one side of an electrically-conductive, generally porous fabric, the material of the invention affords UL94 V-0 protection when used as a jacketing in a fabric-over-foam gasket construction. Advantageously, as the flame retardant layer may be wet coated on the fabric without appreciable bleed through, a relatively thin, i.e., 2–4 mil (0.05–0.10 mm), coating layer may be provided on one fabric side without compromising the electrical surface conductivity of the other side. Such a thin coating layer, while being sufficient to provide UL94 V-0 protection, nonetheless maintains the drapability the fabric and thereby facilitates the construction UL94 V-0 compliant gaskets having complex profiles or narrow cross-sections down to about 1 mm.

In a preferred embodiment, the electrically-conductive, flame retardant EMI shielding material of the invention includes a nickel or silver-plated, woven nylon, polyester, or like fabric on one side of which is wet coated a layer of a flame retardant, acrylic latex emulsion or other fluent resin composition. In accordance with the precepts of the method of the invention, the viscosity and hydrodynamic pressure of the emulsion are controlled such that the coating does not penetrate or otherwise "bleed through" the uncoated side of the fabric. The surface conductivity of the opposite side of the fabric therefore is not compromised in EMI shielding applications.

The material of the invention may be employed as a jacket in fabric-over-foam EMI shielding gasket constructions, and is particularly adapted for use in the continuous molding process for such gaskets. As used within such process, the fabric may be wrapped around the foam as a jacket with coated side thereof being disposed as an interior surface adjacent the foam, and the uncoated side being disposed as an electrically-conductive exterior surface. Advantageously, the coating on the interior surface of the jacket blocks the pores of the fabric to retain the foam therein without penetrate or bleed through to the exterior surface. In being formed of a acrylic material, the coated interior surface of the jacket may function, moreover, depending upon the composition of the foam, as a compatibilizing or "tie" interlayer which promotes the bonding of the foam to the fabric.

The present invention, accordingly, comprises material and method possessing the construction, combination of elements, and arrangement of parts and steps which are exemplified in the detailed disclosure to follow. Advantages of the present invention include a flame retardant yet drapable EMI shielding fabric. Additional advantages include an economical, flame retardant EMI shielding fabric construction wherein a relatively thin layer of a flame retardant coating may be wet coated onto one side of an electrically-conductive, woven or other generally porous EMI shielding fabric without compromising the conductivity of the other side of the fabric. These and other advantages will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art based upon the disclosure contained herein.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a fuller understanding of the nature and objects of the invention, reference should be had to the following detailed description taken in connection with the accompanying drawings wherein:

FIG. **1** is a perspective view of one embodiment of an EMI shielding material according to the present invention which material includes a generally planar fabric member on one side of which is coated a layer of a flame retardant composition, the view being shown with portions being broken away to better reveal the structure of the material;

FIG. **2** is an enlarged cross-sectional view of the EMI shielding material of FIG. **1** taken through plane represented by line **2**—**2** of FIG. **1**;

FIG. **3** is a top view of the material of FIG. **1** which is magnified to reveal the structure of the fabric member thereof;

FIG. **4** is a perspective cross-sectional view of a length of a representative EMI shielding gasket construction according to the present invention including a jacket which is formed of the EMI shielding material of FIG. **1**;

FIG. **5** is an end view of the gasket of FIG. **4** which is magnified to reveal the structure thereof; and

FIG. **6** is a schematic, partially cross-sectional view of an illustrative gravity-fed, knife over roll coater as adapted for use in the manufacture of the EMI shielding material of FIG. **1**.

The drawings will be described further in connection with the following Detailed Description of the Invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Certain terminology may be employed in the description to follow for convenience rather than for any limiting purpose. For example, the terms "upper" and "lower" designate directions in the drawings to which reference is made, with the terms "inner" or "interior" and "outer" or "exterior" referring, respectively, to directions toward and away from the center of the referenced element, and the terms "radial" and "axial" referring, respectively, to directions perpendicu-

lar and parallel to the longitudinal central axis of the referenced element. Terminology of similar import other than the words specifically mentioned above likewise is to be considered as being used for purposes of convenience rather than in any limiting sense.

For the illustrative purposes of the discourse to follow, the electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielding material herein involved is described in connection with its use as a flame retardant, electrically-conductive jacket for a foam core, EMI shielding gasket as may be adapted to be received within an interface, such as between a door, panel, hatch, cover, or other parting line of an electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielding structure. The EMI shielding structure may be the conductive housing of a computer, communications equipment, or other electronic device or equipment which generates EMI radiation or is susceptible to the effects thereof. The gasket may be bonded or fastened to, or press-fit into one of a pair of mating surfaces which define the interface within the housing, and functions between the mating surfaces to seal any interface gaps or other irregularities. That is, while under an applied pressure, the gasket resiliently conforms to any such irregularities both to establish a continuous conductive path across the interface, and to environmentally seal the interior of the housing against the ingress of dust, moisture, or other contaminates. It will be appreciated, however, that aspects of the present invention may find utility in other EMI shielding applications. Use within those such other applications therefore should be considered to be expressly within the scope of the present invention.

Referring then to the figures, wherein corresponding reference characters are used to designate corresponding elements throughout the several views, a flame retardant EMI shielding material according to the present invention is shown generally at 10 in FIG. 1 as generally adapted for use as a jacket within for a foam core gasket construction. For purposes of illustration, material sheet **10** is shown to be of indefinite dimensions which may be cut to size for the particular application envisioned. In basic construction, material **10** includes an upper, generally planar and porous fabric member, **12**, and a lower, flame retardant coating member, **14**.

Fabric member has at least an electrically-conductive first side, **16**, and a conductive or non-conductive second side, **18**, defining a thickness dimension, referenced at "t_1" in the cross-sectional view of FIG. **2**, which may vary from about 2–4 mils (0.05–0.10 mm). By "electrically-conductive," it is meant that the fabric may be rendered conductive, i.e., to a surface resistivity of about 0.1 Ω/sq. or less, by reason of its being constructed of electrically-conductive wire, monofilaments, yams or other fibers or, alternatively, by reason of a treatment such as a plating or sputtering being applied to non-conductive fibers to provide an electrically-conductive layer thereon. Preferred electrically-conductive fibers include Monel nickel-copper alloy, silver-plated copper, nickel-clad copper, Ferrex® tin-plated copper-clad steel, aluminum, tin-clad copper, phosphor bronze, carbon, graphite, and conductive polymers. Preferred non-conductive fibers include cotton, wool, silk, cellulose, polyester, polyamide, nylon, and polyimide monofilaments or yarns which are rendered electrically conductive with a metal plating of copper, nickel, silver, nickel-plated-silver, aluminum, tin, or an alloy thereof. As is known, the metal plating may applied to individual fiber strands or to the surfaces of the fabric after weaving, knitting, or other fabrication.

While fabrics such as wire meshes, knits, and non-woven cloths and webs may find application, a preferred fabric construction for member **12** is a plain weave nylon or polyester cloth which is made electrically conductive with between about 20–40% by weight based on the total fabric weight, i.e., 0.01–0.10 g/in^2, of a silver, nickel-silver, or silver-nickel over copper plating. As may be seen in the magnified view of FIG. **1** referenced at **20** in FIG. **3**, such cloth is permeable in having a plain, generally square weave pattern with pores or openings, one of which is referenced at **22**, being defined between the fibers which are represented schematically at **24**. Fibers **24** may be yams, monofilaments or, preferably, bundles of from about 10–20 filaments or threads, each having a diameter of between about 10–50 gm. For example, with fibers **24** each being a bundle of such threads with a thread count of between about 1000–3000 per inch and a weave count of between about 1000–1500 per inch, 1000–2000 openings per inch will be defined with a mean average pore size of between about 0.5–2 mils (12.5–50 μm).

Although a plain, square weave pattern such as a taffeta, tabby, or ripstop is considered preferred, other weaves such as satins, twills, and the like also should be considered within the scope of the invention herein involved. A particularly preferred cloth for fabric member **12** is a 4 mil (0.10 mm) thick, 1.8 oz/yd^2 weight, silver-plated, woven nylon which is marketed commercially under the designation "31EN RIPSTOP" by Swift Textile Metalizing Corp., Bloomfield, Conn. However, depending upon the needs of the specific shielding application, a fabric constructed of a combination or blend of conductive and nonconductive fibers alternatively may be employed. Examples of fabrics woven, braided, or warp knitted from electrically-conductive fibers, or from blends of conductive and non-conductive fibers, are described in Gladfelter, U.S. Pat. No. 4,684,762, and in Buonanno, U.S. Pat. No. 4,857,668.

Returning to FIGS. **1** and **2**, coating member **14** preferably is formed from a curable layer of a fluent, flame retardant resin or other composition which is wet coated onto the second side **18** of fabric member **12**. As is detailed hereinafter, the viscosity and hydrodynamic pressure of the resin composition are controlled in accordance with the precepts of the present invention to delimit the penetration of the resin layer to a depth, referenced at "d" in FIG. **2**, which is less than the thickness dimension t_1 of the fabric member **12**. In this regard, when the layer is cured to form the flame retardant surface coating member **14** on the second side **18** of fabric member **12**, the first side **16** thereof remains electrically-conductive. In a preferred construction, the layer is coated to a wet thickness of about 10 mils (0.25 mm), and then cured to a dried coating or film thickness, referenced at t_2 in FIG. **2**, of between about 2–4 mils (0.05–0.10 mm) at a depth d of about 1–2 mils (0.025–0.05 mm). Ultimately, a total material thickness, referenced at "T," of between about 6–7 mils (0.15–0.20 mm) and a dried weight pickup of between about 100–150 g/yd^2 are observed. By "cured" it is meant that the resin is polymerized, cross-linked, further cross-linked or polymerized, vulcanized, hardened, dried, volatilized, or otherwise chemically or physically changed from a liquid or other fluent form into a solid polymeric or elastomeric phase.

The flame retardant composition preferably is formulated as an aqueous emulsion of an acrylic latex emulsion which is adjusted to a total solids of about 60% and a Brookfield viscosity (#5 spindle, 4 speed) of between about 40,000–60,000 cps, at a density of about 10 lbs per gallon (1.8 g/cm^3). Flame retardancy may be imparted by loading the emulsion with between about 30–50% by weight of one or more conventional flame retardant additives such as aluminum

hydrate, antimony trioxide, phosphate esters, or halogenated compounds such as polybrominated diphenyl oxides. A preferred formulation is a mixture of about 25% by weight, based on the total weight of the emulsion, of decambromodiphenyl oxide and about 15% by weight of one or more antimony compounds. In operation, should the acrylic carrier phase be ignited, the decomposition of the halogenated and metal oxide compounds function to chemically deprive the flame of sufficient oxygen to support combustion. The decomposition of the acrylic phase additionally may lead to the development of a protective, i.e., thermally-insulative or refractory, outer char layer.

A preferred flame retardant, acrylic latex emulsion is marketed commercially by Heveatex Corp., Fall River, Mass., under the designation "4129FR." The viscosity of the emulsion may be adjusted to between about 40,000–60,000 cps using an aqueous acryloid gel or other acrylic thickener. In this regard, the increased viscosity of the emulsion contributes to delimiting the penetration of the coating layer into the fabric member. However, as this relatively high viscosity may lead to undesirable porosity in the dried film, the emulsion additionally may be modified to reduce air entrapment and bubble formation in the coating layer with up to about 1% by weight of one or more commercial surfactants such as "Bubble Breaker" by Witco Chemical Corp. (Chicago, Ill.) and "Foam Master Antifoam" by Diamond Shamrock, Inc. (San Antonio, Tex.).

As aforementioned, EMI shielding material **10** of the present invention is particularly adapted for use as a flame retardant, electrically-conductive jacket which is provided over a foam core in an EMI shielding gasket construction such as gasket **50** of FIG. **4**. In a representative embodiment, gasket **50** includes an elongate, resilient foam core member, **52**, which may be of an indefinite length. Core member **52** has an outer circumferential surface, **54**, defining the cross-sectional profile of gasket **50** which, for illustrative purposes, is of a generally polygonal, i.e., square or rectangular geometry. Other plane profiles, such as circular, semicircular, or elliptical, or complex profiles may be substituted, however, depending upon the geometry of the interface to be sealed. Core member **12** may be of any radial or diametric extent, but for most applications will have a diametric extent or width of from about 0.25 inch (0.64 cm) to 1 inch (2.54 cm).

For affording gap-filling capabilities, it is preferred that core member **52** is provided to be complaint over a wide range of temperatures, and to exhibit good compression-relaxation hysteresis even after repeated cyclings or long compressive dwells. Core member **52** therefore may be formed of a foamed elastomeric thermoplastic such as a polyethylene, polypropylene, polypropylene-EPDM blend, butadiene, styrene-butadiene, nitrile, chlorosulfonate, or a foamed neoprene, urethane, or silicone. Preferred materials of construction include open or closed cell urethanes or blends such as a polyolefin resin/monoolefin copolymer blend, or a neoprene, silicone, or nitrile sponge rubber.

Core member **52** may be provided as an extruded or molded foam profile over which shielding material **10** is wrapped as a sheathed, with the edges of sheathed being overlapped as at **56**. In a preferred construction, shielding material **10** is bonded to the core member **52** in a continuous molding process wherein the foam is blown or expanded within the shielding material. As may be seen best with reference to the magnified view of FIG. **4** referenced at **60** in FIG. **5**, in such construction coating member **14** is disposed adjacent core member **52** as an interior surface, **62**, of shielding member **10**, with the uncoated side **16** of fabric member **12** being oppositely disposed as an electrically-conductive exterior surface, **64**, of the gasket **50**. It will be appreciated that the coated interior surface **62** blocks the pores **22** (FIG. **3**) of the fabric member **12** of the fabric to retain the blown foam therein without penetrate or bleed through to the exterior gasket surface **64**. Depending upon the respective compositions of the foam and coating, the interior surface **62** may function, moreover, as a compatibilizing or "tie" interlayer which promotes the bonding of the foam to the fabric. Gasket construction **50** advantageously provides a structure that may be used in very low closure force, i.e. less than about 1 lb/inch (0.175 N/mm), applications.

Referring again to FIG. **4**, an adhesive layer, **70**, may be applied along the lengthwise extent of gasket **50** to the underside of exterior surface **64** for the attachment of the gasket to a substrate. Such layer **70** preferably is formulated to be of a pressure sensitive adhesive (PSA) variety. As is described in U.S. Pat. No. 4,988,550, suitable PSA's for EMI shielding applications include formulations based on silicones, neoprene, styrene butadiene copolymers, acrylics, acrylates, polyvinyl ethers, polyvinyl acetate copolymers, polyisobutylenes, and mixtures, blends, and copolymers thereof. Acrylic-based formulations, however, generally are considered to be preferred for the EMI applications of the type herein involved. Although PSA's are preferred for adhesive layer **70**, other adhesives such as epoxies and urethanes may be substituted and, accordingly, are to be considered within the scope of the present invention. Heat-fusible adhesives such a hot-melts and thermoplastic films additionally may find applicability.

Inasmuch as the bulk conductivity of gasket **50** is determined substantially through its surface contact with the substrate, an electrically-conductive PSA may be preferred to ensure optimal EMI shielding performance. Such adhesives conventionally are formulated as containing about 1–25% by weight of a conductive filler to yield a volume resistivity of from about 0.01–0.001 Ω-cm. The filler may be incorporated in the form of particles, fibers, flakes, microspheres, or microballoons, and may range in size of from about 1–100 microns. Typically filler materials include inherently conductive material such as metals, carbon, and graphite, or nonconductive materials such as plastic or glass having a plating of a conductive material such as a noble metal or the like. In this regard, the means by which the adhesive is rendered electrically conductive is not considered to be a critical aspect of the present invention, such that any means achieving the desired conductivity and adhesion are to be considered suitable.

For protecting the outer portion of adhesive layer **70** which is exposed on the exterior surface of the gasket, a release sheets, shown at **72**, may be provided as removably attached to the exposed adhesive. As is common in the adhesive art, release sheet **72** may be provided as strip of a waxed, siliconized, or other coated paper or plastic sheet or the like having a relatively low surface energy so as to be removable without appreciable lifting of the adhesive from the exterior surface **64**.

In the production of commercial quantities of the EMI shielding material **10** of the present invention, the viscosity adjusted and otherwise modified acrylic latex emulsion or other resin composition may be coated and cured on one side the fabric member **12** by a direct wet process such as knife over roll or slot die. With whatever process is employed, the hydrodynamic pressure of the resin composition is controlled in accordance with the precepts of the present invention to delimit the penetration of the resin layer to a depth

which is less than the thickness dimension of the fabric member. For example, and with reference to FIG. 6 wherein the head of a representative gravity-fed knife over roll coater is shown somewhat schematically at **100**, porous, i.e., permeable, fabric member **12** is conveyed from a feed roll or the like (not shown) over a nip roller, **102**, which rotates in the direction referenced by arrow **104**. With the first side **16** of fabric member **12** supported on roller **102**, the fabric second side **18** is passed beneath the opening, referenced at **106**, of a coating trough, **108**. Trough **108** is defined by a front plate, **110**, a back plate, **112**, and a pair of side plates (not shown).

The emulsion or other fluent resin composition, referenced at **114**, is pumped or otherwise transported into trough **108** which is filled to a fluid level, referenced at h. For a given fluid density, this level h is controlled such that the hydrodynamic pressure at the fabric-liquid interface is maintained within preset limits. For example, with a fluid density of about 10 pounds per gallon (1.8 g/cm^3), and a fabric having a porosity of about 1000–2000 openings per inch with a mean average pore size of between about 0.5–2 mils (12.5–50 μm), the fluid level H is controlled at about 4 inches (10 cm) to yield a hydrodynamic pressure of about 0.05 psi (0.35 kPa) at the fabric-liquid interface. For other coating processes, the hydrodynamic fluid pressure may be controlled, for example, by a pumping pressure or the like.

In the illustrative knife-over-roll coating process, the lower edge, **120**, of front plate **110** defines a knife surface which is shimmed or otherwise spaced-apart a predetermined distance from the second side **18** of fabric member **12**. Such spacing provides a clearance or gap, referenced at "g," of typically about 10 mils (0.25 mm), but which is adjustable to regulate the thickness of the liquid coating layer, **122**, being applied to the fabric member. From roller **104**, the coated fabric member **12** may be conveyed via a take-up roller arrangement (not shown) through a in-line oven or the like to dry or flash the water or other diluent in the liquid coating layer **122**, or to otherwise cure the liquid coating layer **122** in developing an adherent, tack-free, film or other layer of coating member **14** (FIG. 1) on the single side **18** of fabric member **12**.

The Example to follow, wherein all percentages and proportions are by weight unless otherwise expressly indicated, is illustrative of the practicing of the invention herein involved, but should not be construed in any limiting sense.

EXAMPLE

Representative EMI shielding materials according to the present invention were constructed for characterization. In this regard, a master batch of a flame retardant coating composition was compounded using an acrylic latex emulsion (Heveatex "4129FR"). The viscosity of the emulsion was adjusted to a Brookfield viscosity (#4 spindle, 40 speed) of about 60,000 cps with about 5 wt % of an acryloid thickener (Acrysol™ GS, Monsanto Co., St. Louis, Mo.). The modified emulsion had a total solids content of about 60% by weight, a density of about 10 pounds per gallon (1.8 g/cm^3), and a pH of between about 7.5 and 9.5.

The emulsion was applied using a knife over roll coater (JETZONE Model 7319, Wolverine Corp., Merrimac, Mass.) to one side of a silver-plated nylon fabric (Swift "31EN RIPSTOP") having a thickness of about 4 mils (0.1 mm). With the fluid level in the coating trough of the coater maintained at about 4 inch (10 cm), the emulsion was delivered to the surface of the cloth at a hydrodynamic

pressure of about 0.05 psi (0.35 kPa). The coating knife was shimmed to a 10 mil (0.25 mm) gap above the fabric to yield a wet coating draw down thickness of about 10 mils. Following an oven curing at 100–125° C. for 5 minutes, a dried coating or film thickness of about 2.5 mils (0.635 mm) was obtained with a weight pickup of about 130–145 g/yd^2 and a total material thickness of between about 6–7 mils (0.15–0.18 mm). An inspection of the coated fabric cloth revealed a coating penetration depth of about 1–2 mils (0.02–0.05 mm) providing acceptable mechanical retention and/or adhesion of the coating onto the fabric surface. The opposite side of the fabric, however, was observed to be substantially coating free, and to retain a surface resistivity of about 0.1 Ω/sq for unaffected EMI shielding effectiveness.

Fabric samples similarly coated in the manner described were subjected to an in-house vertical flame test. No burning was observed at dried film thickness of 2, 3, or 4 mils (0.05, 0.08, 0.10 mm). Accordingly, a reasonable operating window of film thickness was suggested for production runs.

Samples also were provided, as jacketed over a polyurethane foam core in an EMI shielding gasket construction, for flame testing by Underwriters Laboratories, Inc., Melville, N.Y. A flame class rating of V-0 under UL94 was assigned at a minimum thickness of 1.0 mm. The gasket construction therefore was found to be compliant with the applicable UL requirements, and was approved to bear the "UL" certification mark.

The foregoing results confirm that the EMI shielding material of the present invention affords UL94 V-0 protection when used as a jacketing in a fabric-over-foam gasket construction. Unexpectedly, it was found that a relatively porous or permeable fabric may be wet coated on one side with a relatively thin, i.e., 2–4 mil (0.05–0.10 mm), coating layer of a flame retardant composition without compromising the electrical surface conductivity of the other side. Such a thin coating layer, while being sufficient to provide UL94 V-0 protection in a conventional fabric-over-foam gasket construction, nonetheless maintains the drapability the fabric and thereby facilitates the fabrication of UL94 V-0 compliant gaskets having complex profiles or narrow cross-sections down to about 1 mm.

As it is anticipated that certain changes may be made in the present invention without departing from the precepts herein involved, it is intended that all matter contained in the foregoing description shall be interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense. All references cited herein are expressly incorporated by reference.

What is claimed is:

1. A flame retardant, electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielding gasket comprising:

a resilient core member which is not V-0 rated under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94 extending lengthwise along a central longitudinal axis and having an outer surface extending circumferentially about said longitudinal axis, said core member being formed of a foamed elastomeric material;

an electrically-conductive fabric member surrounding the outer surface of said core member, said fabric member having an interior surface disposed facing the outer surface of said core member and an oppositely-facing, exterior surface, at least the exterior surface being electrically-conductive and the exterior surface defining with the interior surface a thickness dimension of the fabric member therebetween; and

a flame retardant layer coating at least a portion of the interior surface of said fabric member, said flame

retardant layer being effective to afford said gasket a flame class rating of V-0 under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94 and penetrating into said fabric member to a depth which is less than the thickness dimension of said fabric member such that the exterior surface of said fabric member remains electrically-conductive.

2. The gasket of claim **1** wherein said flame retardant layer has a thickness of between about 2–4 mils (0.05–0.10 mm).

3. The gasket of claim **1** wherein said flame retardant layer is formed as a cured film of a flame retardant acrylic latex emulsion.

4. The gasket of claim **1** wherein said fabric member is a metal-plated cloth.

5. The gasket of claim **4** wherein said cloth comprises fibers selected from the group consisting of cotton, wool, silk, cellulose, polyester, polyamide, nylon, and combinations thereof, and said metal is selected from the group consisting of copper, nickel, silver, nickel-plated-silver, aluminum, tin, and combinations thereof.

6. The gasket of claim **1** wherein said foamed elastomeric material is selected from the group consisting of polyethylenes, polypropylenes, polypropylene-EPDM blends, butadienes, styrene-butadienes, nitriles, chlorosulfonates, neoprenes, urethanes, silicones, and polyolefin resin/monoolefin copolymer blends, and combinations thereof.

7. The gasket of claim **1** wherein said fabric member has a thickness of between about 2–4 mils (0.05–0.10 mm).

8. A flame retardant, electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielding gasket comprising:

a resilient core member extending lengthwise along a central longitudinal axis and having an outer surface extending circumferentially about said longitudinal axis, said core member being formed of a foamed elastomeric material;

an electrically-conductive fabric member surrounding the outer surface of said core member, said fabric member having an interior surface disposed facing the outer surface of said core member and an oppositely-facing, exterior surface, at least the exterior surface being electrically-conductive and the exterior surface defining with the interior surface a thickness dimension of the fabric member therebetween; and

a flame retardant layer coating at least a portion of the interior surface of said fabric member, said flame retardant layer comprising between about 30–50% by weight of one or more flame retardant additives and penetrating into said fabric member to a depth which is less than the thickness dimension of said fabric member such that the exterior surface of said fabric member remains electrically-conductive.

9. The gasket of claim **8** wherein said flame retardant layer has a thickness of between about 2–4 mils (0.05–0.10 mm).

10. The gasket of claim **8** wherein said flame retardant layer is formed as a cured film of a flame retardant acrylic latex emulsion.

11. The gasket of claim **8** wherein said fabric member is a metal-plated cloth.

12. The gasket of claim **11** wherein said cloth comprises fibers selected from the group consisting of cotton, wool, silk, cellulose, polyester, polyamide, nylon, and combinations thereof, and said metal is selected from the group consisting of copper, nickel, silver, nickel-plated-silver, aluminum, tin, and combinations thereof.

13. The gasket of claim **8** wherein said foamed elastomeric material is selected from the group consisting of polyethylenes, polypropylenes, polypropylene-EPDM blends, butadienes, styrene-butadienes, nitriles, chlorosulfonates, neoprenes, urethanes, silicones, and polyolefin resin/monoolefin copolymer blends, and combinations thereof.

14. The gasket of claim **8** wherein said fabric member has a thickness of between about 2–4 mils (0.05–0.10 mm).

15. The gasket of claim **8** wherein said flame retardant layer is effective to afford the gasket a flame class rating of V-0 under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94.

16. The gasket of claim **15** wherein said core member is not V-0 rated under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94.

17. The gasket of claim **8** wherein said core member is not V-0 rated under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94.

18. The gasket of claim **8** wherein said one or more flame retardant additives are selected from the group consisting of aluminum hydrate, antimony trioxide, phosphate esters, and halogenated compounds.

* * * * *

US006777095B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Bunyan et al.

(10) **Patent No.: US 6,777,095 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent: Aug. 17, 2004**

(54) **FLAME RETARDANT EMI SHIELDING GASKET**

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

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(63) Continuation of application No. 10/318,609, filed on Dec. 11, 2002, now Pat. No. 6,716,536, which is a continuation of application No. 10/142,803, filed on May 9, 2002, now Pat. No. 6,521,348, which is a continuation of application No. 09/883,785, filed on Jun. 18, 2001, now Pat. No. 6,387,523, which is a continuation of application No. 09/250,338, filed on Feb. 16, 1999, now Pat. No. 6,248,393.

(60) Provisional application No. 60/076,370, filed on Feb. 27, 1998.

(51) **Int. Cl.**[7] **B32B 5/14**; B32B 5/18; H05K 9/00

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **428/457**; 361/818

(58) **Field of Search** 428/457; 361/818

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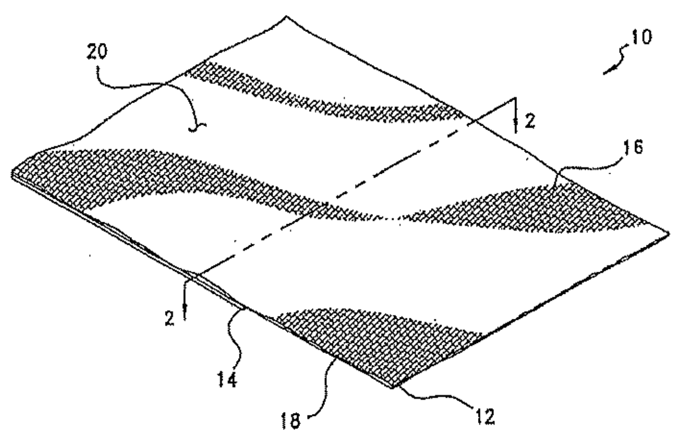
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A flame retardant, electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielding gasket construction. The construction includes a resilient core member formed of a foamed elastomeric material, an electrically-conductive fabric member surrounding the outer surface of the core member, and a flame retardant layer coating at least a portion of the interior surface of the fabric member. The flame retardant layer is effective to afford the gasket construction with a flame class rating of V-0 under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94.

10 Claims, 3 Drawing Sheets



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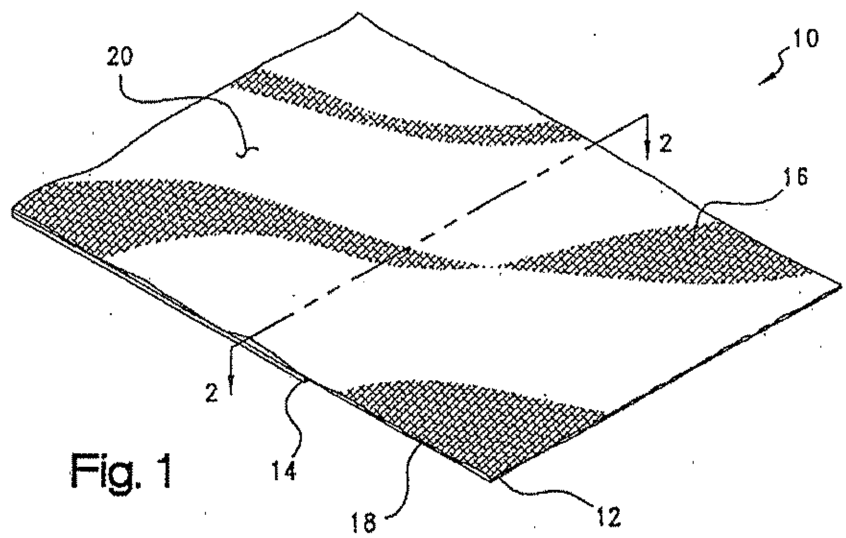

Fig. 1

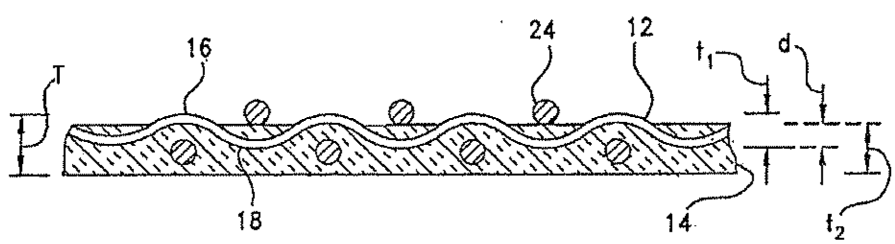

Fig. 2

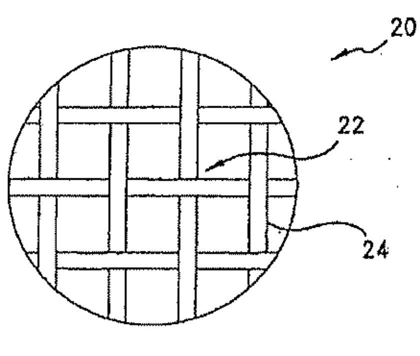

Fig. 3

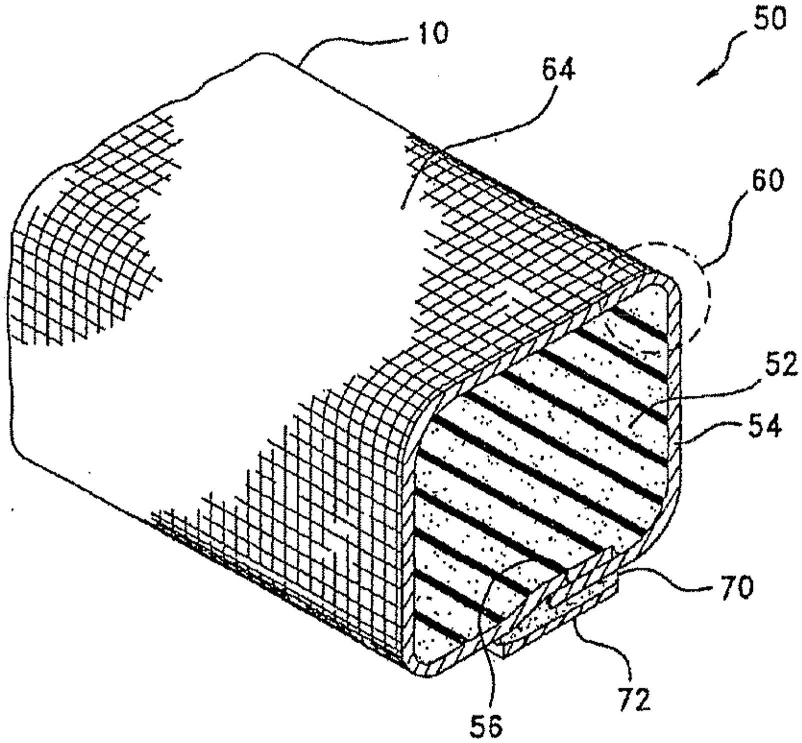

Fig. 4

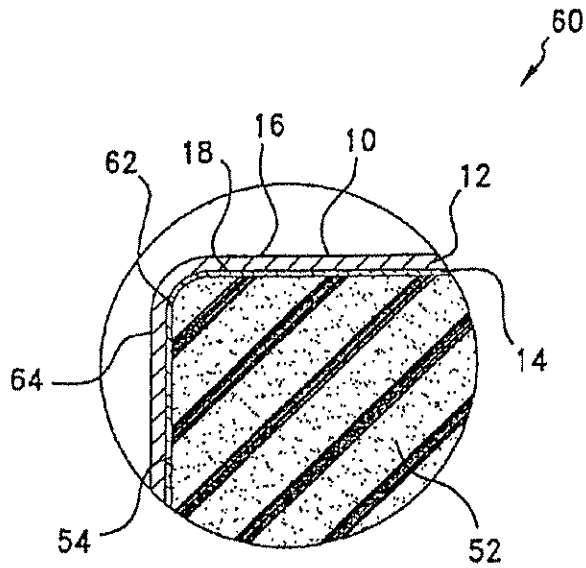

Fig. 5

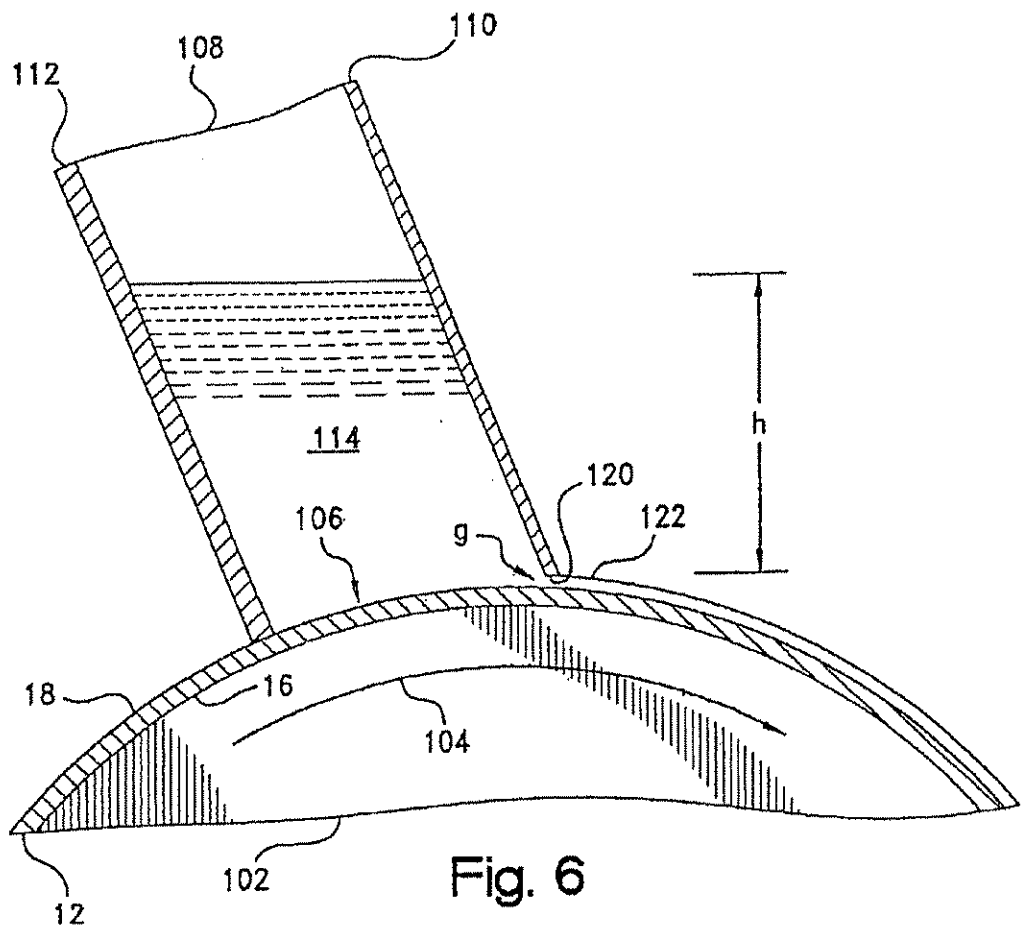

Fig. 6

FLAME RETARDANT EMI SHIELDING GASKET

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 10/318,609, filed Dec. 11, 2002, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,716,536; which is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 10/142,803, filed May 9, 2002, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,521,348; which is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 09/883,785, filed Jun. 18, 2001, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,387,523; which is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 09/250,338, filed Feb. 16, 1999, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,248,393 and claiming priority to U.S. Provisional application Serial No. 60/076,370, filed Feb. 27, 1998, the disclosure of each of which is expressly incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates broadly to electrically-conductive, flame retardant materials for use in electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielding, and to a method of manufacturing the same, and more particularly to an electrically-conductive fabric having a layer of a flame retardant coating applied to one surface thereof for use as a sheathing within an EMI shielding gasket.

The operation of electronic devices including televisions, radios, computers, medical instruments, business machines, communications equipment, and the like is attended by the generation of electromagnetic radiation within the electronic circuitry of the equipment. Such radiation often develops as a field or as transients within the radio frequency band of the electromagnetic spectrum, i.e., between about 10 KHz and 10 GHz, and is termed "electromagnetic interference" or "EMI" as being known to interfere with the operation of other proximate electronic devices.

To attenuate EMI effects, shielding having the capability of absorbing and/or reflecting EMI energy may be employed both to confine the EMI energy within a source device, and to insulate that device or other "target" devices from other source devices. Such shielding is provided as a barrier which is inserted between the source and the other devices, and typically is configured as an electrically conductive and grounded housing which encloses the device. As the circuitry of the device generally must remain accessible for servicing or the like, most housings are provided with openable or removable accesses such as doors, hatches, panels, or covers. Between even the flattest of these accesses and its corresponding mating or faying surface, however, there may be present gaps which reduce the efficiency of the shielding by presenting openings through which radiant energy may leak or otherwise pass into or out of the device. Moreover, such gaps represent discontinuities in the surface and ground conductivity of the housing or other shielding, and may even generate a secondary source of EMI radiation by functioning as a form of slot antenna. In this regard, bulk or surface currents induced within the housing develop voltage gradients across any interface gaps in the shielding, which gaps thereby function as antennas which radiate EMI noise. In general, the amplitude of the noise is proportional to the gap length, with the width of the gap having a less appreciable effect.

For filling gaps within mating surfaces of housings and other EMI shielding structures, gaskets and other seals have been proposed both for maintaining electrical continuity across the structure, and for excluding from the interior of

the device such contaminates as moisture and dust. Such seals are bonded or mechanically attached to, or press-fit into, one of the mating surfaces, and function to close any interface gaps to establish a continuous conductive path thereacross by conforming under an applied pressure to irregularities between the surfaces. Accordingly, seals intended for EMI shielding applications are specified to be of a construction which not only provides electrical surface conductivity even while under compression, but which also has a resiliency allowing the seals to conform to the size of the gap. The seals additionally must be wear resistant, economical to manufacture, and capability of withstanding repeated compression and relaxation cycles. For further information on specifications for EMI shielding gaskets, reference may be had to Severinsen, J., "Gaskets That Block EMI," Machine Design, Vol. 47, No. 19, pp. 74–77 (Aug. 7, 1975).

Requirements for typical EMI shielding applications often dictate a low impedance, low profile gasket which is deflectable under normal closure force loads. Other requirements include low cost and a design which provides an EMI shielding effectiveness for both the proper operation of the device and compliance, in the United States, with commercial Federal Communication Commission (FCC) EMC regulations.

A particularly economical gasket construction, which also requires very low closure forces, i.e. less than about 1 lb/inch (0.175 N/mm), is marketed by the Chomerics Division of Parker-Hannifin Corp., Woburn, Mass. under the tradenarne "Soft-Shield ® 5000 Series." Such construction consists of an electrically-conductive jacket or sheathing which is "cigarette" wrapped lengthwise over a polyurethane or other foam core. As is described further in U.S. Pat. No. 4,871,477, polyurethane foams generally are produced by the reaction of polyisocyanate and a hydroxyl-functional polyol in the presence of a blowing agent. The blowing agent effects the expansion of the polymer structure into a multiplicity of open or closed cells.

The jacket is provided as a highly conductive, i.e., about 1 Ω-sq., nickel-plated-silver, woven rip-stop nylon which is self-terminating when cut. Advantageously, the jacket may be bonded to the core in a continuous molding process wherein the foam is blown or expanded within the jacket as the jacket is wrapped around the expanding foam and the foam and jacket are passed through a die and into a traveling molding. Similar gasket constructions are shown in commonly-assigned U.S. Pat. No. 5,028,739 and in U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,857,668; 5,054,635; 5,105,056; and 5,202,536.

Many electronic devices, including PC's and communication equipment, must not only comply with certain FCC requirements, but also must meet be approved under certain Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) standards for flame retardancy. In this regard, if each of the individual components within an electronic device is UL approved, then the device itself does not require separate approval. Ensuring UL approval for each component therefore reduces the cost of compliance for the manufacturer, and ultimately may result in cheaper goods for the consumer. For EMI shielding gaskets, however, such gaskets must be made flame retardant, i.e., achieving a rating of V-0 under UL Std. No. 94, "Tests for Flammability of Plastic Materials for Parts in Devices and Appliances" (1991), without compromising the electrical conductivity necessary for meeting EMI shielding requirements.

In this regard, and particularly with respect to EMI shielding gaskets of the above-described fabric over foam

variety, it has long been recognized that foamed polymeric materials are flammable and, in certain circumstances, may present a fire hazard. Owing to their cellular structure, high organic content, and surface area, most foam materials are subject to relatively rapid decomposition upon exposure to fire or high temperatures.

One approach for imparting flame retardancy to fabric over foam gaskets has been to employ the sheathing as a flame resistant protective layer for the foam. Indeed, V-0 rating compliance purportedly has been achieved by sheathing the foam within an electrically-conductive Ni/Cu-plated fabric to which a thermoplastic sheet is hot nipped or otherwise fusion bonding to the underside thereof. Such fabrics, which may be further described in one or more of U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,489,126; 4,531,994; 4,608,104; and/or 4,621,013, have been marketed by Monsanto Co., St. Louis, under the tradename "Flectron® Ni/Cu Polyester Taffeta V0."

Other fabric over foam gaskets, as is detailed in U.S. Pat. No. 4,857,668, incorporate a supplemental layer or coating applied to the interior surface of the sheath. Such coating may be a flame-retardant urethane formulation which also promotes the adhesion of the sheath to the foam. The coating additionally may function to reduce bleeding of the foam through the fabric which otherwise could compromise the electrical conductivity of the sheath.

In view of the foregoing, it will be appreciated that further improvements in the design of flame retardant, fabric-over foam EMI shielding gaskets, as well as sheathing materials therefore, would be well-received by the electronics industry. Especially desired would be a flame retardant gasket construction which achieves a UL94 rating of V-0.

BROAD STATEMENT OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to an electrically-conductive, flame retardant material for use in fabric-over-foam EMI shielding gaskets, and to a method of manufacturing the same. In having a layer of a flame retardant coating applied to one side of an electrically-conductive, generally porous fabric, the material of the invention affords UL94 V-0 protection when used as a jacketing in a fabric-over-foam gasket construction. Advantageously, as the flame retardant layer may be wet coated on the fabric without appreciable bleed through, a relatively thin, i.e., 2–4 mil (0.05–0.10 mm), coating layer may be provided on one fabric side without compromising the electrical surface conductivity of the other side. Such a thin coating layer, while being sufficient to provide UL94 V-0 protection, nonetheless maintains the drapability the fabric and thereby facilitates the construction UL94 V-0 compliant gaskets having complex profiles or narrow cross-sections down to about 1 mm.

In a preferred embodiment, the electrically-conductive, flame retardant EMI shielding material of the invention includes a nickel or silver-plated, woven nylon, polyester, or like fabric on one side of which is wet coated a layer of a flame retardant, acrylic latex emulsion or other fluent resin composition. In accordance with the precepts of the method of the invention, the viscosity and hydrodynamic pressure of the emulsion are controlled such that the coating does not penetrate or otherwise "bleed through" the uncoated side of the fabric. The surface conductivity of the opposite side of the fabric therefore is not compromised in EMI shielding applications.

The material of the invention may be employed as a jacket in fabric-over-foam EMI shielding gasket constructions, and is particularly adapted for use in the continuous molding process for such gaskets. As used within such process, the fabric may be wrapped around the foam as a jacket with coated side thereof being disposed as an interior surface adjacent the foam, and the uncoated side being disposed as an electrically-conductive exterior surface. Advantageously, the coating on the interior surface of the jacket blocks the pores of the fabric to retain the foam therein without penetrate or bleed through to the exterior surface. In being formed of a acrylic material, the coated interior surface of the jacket may function, moreover, depending upon the composition of the foam, as a compatibilizing or "tie" interlayer which promotes the bonding of the foam to the fabric.

The present invention, accordingly, comprises material and method possessing the construction, combination of elements, and arrangement of parts and steps which are exemplified in the detailed disclosure to follow. Advantages of the present invention include a flame retardant yet drapable EMI shielding fabric. Additional advantages include an economical, flame retardant EMI shielding fabric construction wherein a relatively thin layer of a flame retardant coating may be wet coated onto one side of an electrically-conductive, woven or other generally porous EMI shielding fabric without compromising the conductivity of the other side of the fabric. These and other advantages will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art based upon the disclosure contained herein.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a fuller understanding of the nature and objects of the invention, reference should be had to the following detailed description taken in connection with the accompanying drawings wherein:

FIG. **1** is a perspective view of one embodiment of an EMI shielding material according to the present invention which material includes a generally planar fabric member on one side of which is coated a layer of a flame retardant composition, the view being shown with portions being broken away to better reveal the structure of the material;

FIG. **2** is an enlarged cross-sectional view of the EMI shielding material of FIG. **1** taken through plane represented by line **2**—**2** of FIG. **1**;

FIG. **3** is a top view of the material of FIG. **1** which is magnified to reveal the structure of the fabric member thereof;

FIG. **4** is a perspective cross-sectional view of a length of a representative EMI shielding gasket construction according to the present invention including a jacket which is formed of the EMI shielding material of FIG. **1**;

FIG. **5** is an end view of the gasket of FIG. **4** which is magnified to reveal the structure thereof; and

FIG. **6** is a schematic, partially cross-sectional view of an illustrative gravity-fed, knife over roll coater as adapted for use in the manufacture of the EMI shielding material of FIG. **1**.

The drawings will be described further in connection with the following Detailed Description of the Invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Certain terminology may be employed in the description to follow for convenience rather than for any limiting purpose. For example, the terms "upper" and "lower" designate directions in the drawings to which reference is made,

with the terms "inner" or "interior" and "outer" or "exterior" referring, respectively, to directions toward and away from the center of the referenced element, and the terms "radial" and "axial" referring, respectively, to directions perpendicular and parallel to the longitudinal central axis of the referenced element. Terminology of similar import other than the words specifically mentioned above likewise is to be considered as being used for purposes of convenience rather than in any limiting sense.

For the illustrative purposes of the discourse to follow, the electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielding material herein involved is described in connection with its use as a flame retardant, electrically-conductive jacket for a foam core, EMI shielding gasket as may be adapted to be received within an interface, such as between a door, panel, hatch, cover, or other parting line of an electromagnetic interference (EM) shielding structure. The EMI shielding structure may be the conductive housing of a computer, communications equipment, or other electronic device or equipment which generates EMI radiation or is susceptible to the effects thereof. The gasket may be bonded or fastened to, or press-fit into one of a pair of mating surfaces which define the interface within the housing, and functions between the mating surfaces to seal any interface gaps or other irregularities. That is, while under an applied pressure, the gasket resiliently conforms to any such irregularities both to establish a continuous conductive path across the interface, and to environmentally seal the interior of the housing against the ingress of dust, moisture, or other contaminates. It will be appreciated, however, that aspects of the present invention may find utility in other EMI shielding applications. Use within those such other applications therefore should be considered to be expressly within the scope of the present invention.

Referring then to the figures, wherein corresponding reference characters are used to designate corresponding elements throughout the several views, a flame retardant EMI shielding material according to the present invention is shown generally at **10** in FIG. **1** as generally adapted for use as a jacket within for a foam core gasket construction. For purposes of illustration, material sheet **10** is shown to be of indefinite dimensions which may be cut to size for the particular application envisioned. In basic construction, material **10** includes an upper, generally planar and porous fabric member, **12**, and a lower, flame retardant coating member, **14**.

Fabric member has at least an electrically-conductive first side, **16**, and a conductive or non-conductive second side, **18**, defining a thickness dimension, referenced at "t_1" in the cross-sectional view of FIG. **2**, which may vary from about 2–4 mils (0.05–0.10 mm). By "electrically-conductive," it is meant that the fabric may be rendered conductive, i.e., to a surface resistivity of about 0.1 Ω/sq. or less, by reason of its being constructed of electrically-conductive wire, monofilaments, yams or other fibers or, alternatively, by reason of a treatment such as a plating or sputtering being applied to non-conductive fibers to provide an electrically-conductive layer thereon. Preferred electrically-conductive fibers include Monel nickel-copper alloy, silver-plated copper, nickel-clad copper, Ferrex® tin-plated copper-clad steel, aluminum, tin-clad copper, phosphor bronze, carbon, graphite, and conductive polymers. Preferred non-conductive fibers include cotton, wool, silk, cellulose, polyester, polyanide, nylon, and polyimide monofilaments or yarns which are rendered electrically conductive with a metal plating of copper, nickel, silver, nickel-plated-silver, aluminum, tin, or an alloy thereof. As is known, the metal plating may applied to individual fiber strands or to the surfaces of the fabric after weaving, knitting, or other fabrication.

While fabrics such as wire meshes, knits, and non-woven cloths and webs may find application, a preferred fabric construction for member **12** is a plain weave nylon or polyester cloth which is made electrically conductive with between about 20–40% by weight based on the total fabric weight, i.e., 0.01–0.10 g/in^2, of a silver, nickel-silver, or silver-nickel over copper plating. As may be seen in the magnified view of FIG. **1** referenced at **20** in FIG. **3**, such cloth is permeable in having a plain, generally square weave pattern with pores or openings, one of which is referenced at **22**, being defined between the fibers which are represented schematically at **24**. Fibers **24** may be yarns, monofilaments or, preferably, bundles of from about 10–20 filaments or threads, each having a diameter of between about 10–50 μm. For example, with fibers **24** each being a bundle of such threads with a thread count of between about 1000–3000 per inch and a weave count of between about 1000–1500 per inch, 1000–2000 openings per inch will be defined with a mean average pore size of between about 0.5–2 mils (12.5–50 μm).

Although a plain, square weave pattern such as a taffeta, tabby, or ripstop is considered preferred, other weaves such as satins, twills, and the like also should be considered within the scope of the invention herein involved. A particularly preferred cloth for fabric member **12** is a 4 mil (0.10 mm) thick, 1.8 oz/yd^2 weight, silver-plated, woven nylon which is marketed commercially under the designation "31EN RIPSTOP" by Swift Textile Metalizing Corp., Bloomfield, Conn. However, depending upon the needs of the specific shielding application, a fabric constructed of a combination or blend of conductive and nonconductive fibers alternatively may be employed. Examples of fabrics woven, braided, or warp knitted from electrically-conductive fibers, or from blends of conductive and non-conductive fibers, are described in Gladfelter, U.S. Pat. No. 4,684,762, and in Buonanno, U.S. Pat. No. 4,857,668.

Returning to FIGS. **1** and **2**, coating member **14** preferably is formed from a curable layer of a fluent, flame retardant resin or other composition which is wet coated onto the second side **18** of fabric member **12**. As is detailed hereinafter, the viscosity and hydrodynamic pressure of the resin composition are controlled in accordance with the precepts of the present invention to delimit the penetration of the resin layer to a depth, referenced at "d" in FIG. **2**, which is less than the thickness dimension t_1 of the fabric member **12**. In this regard, when the layer is cured to form the flame retardant surface coating member **14** on the second side **18** of fabric member **12**, the first side **16** thereof remains electrically-conductive. In a preferred construction, the layer is coated to a wet thickness of about 10 mils (0.25 mm), and then cured to a dried coating or film thickness, referenced at t_2 in FIG. **2**, of between about 2–4 mils (0.05–0.10 mm) at a depth d of about 1–2 mils (0.025–0.05 mm). Ultimately, a total material thickness, referenced at "T," of between about 6–7 mils (0.15–0.20 mm) and a dried weight pickup of between about 100–150 g/yd^2 are observed. By "cured" it is meant that the resin is polymerized, cross-linked, further cross-linked or polymerized, vulcanized, hardened, dried, volatilized, or otherwise chemically or physically changed from a liquid or other fluent form into a solid polymeric or elastomeric phase.

The flame retardant composition preferably is formulated as an aqueous emulsion of an acrylic latex emulsion which is adjusted to a total solids of about 60% and a Brookfield

viscosity (#5 spindle, 4 speed) of between about 40,000–60,000 cps, at a density of about 10 lbs per gallon (1.8 g/cm^3). Flame retardancy may be imparted by loading the emulsion with between about 30–50% by weight of one or more conventional flame retardant additives such as aluminum hydrate, antimony trioxide, phosphate esters, or halogenated compounds such as polybrominated diphenyl oxides. A preferred formulation is a mixture of about 25% by weight, based on the total weight of the emulsion, of decambromodiphenyl oxide and about 15% by weight of one or more antimony compounds. In operation, should the acrylic carrier phase be ignited, the decomposition of the halogenated and metal oxide compounds function to chemically deprive the flame of sufficient oxygen to support combustion. The decomposition of the acrylic phase additionally may lead to the development of a protective, i.e., thermally-insulative or refractory, outer char layer.

A preferred flame retardant, acrylic latex emulsion is marketed commercially by Heveatex Corp., Fall River, Mass., under the designation "4129FR." The viscosity of the emulsion may be adjusted to between about 40,000–60,000 cps using an aqueous acryloid get or other acrylic thickener. In this regard, the increased viscosity of the emulsion contributes to delimiting the penetration of the coating layer into the fabric member. However, as this relatively high viscosity may lead to undesirable porosity in the dried film, the emulsion additionally may be modified to reduce air entrapment and bubble formation in the coating layer with up to about 1% by weight of one or more commercial surfactants such as "Bubble Breaker" by Witco Chemical Corp. (Chicago, Ill.) and "Foam Master Antifoam" by Diamond Shamrock, Inc. (San Antonio, Tex.).

As aforementioned, EMI shielding material **10** of the present invention is particularly adapted for use as a flame retardant, electrically-conductive jacket which is provided over a foam core in an EMI shielding gasket construction such as gasket **50** of FIG. **4**. In a representative embodiment, gasket **50** includes an elongate, resilient foam core member, **52**, which may be of an indefinite length. Core member **52** has an outer circumferential surface, **54**, defining the cross-sectional profile of gasket **50** which, for illustrative purposes, is of a generally polygonal, i.e., square or rectangular geometry. Other plane profiles, such as circular, semicircular, or elliptical, or complex profiles may be substituted, however, depending upon the geometry of the interface to be sealed. Core member **12** may be of any radial or diametric extent, but for most applications will have a diametric extent or width of from about 0.25 inch (0.64 cm) to 1 inch (2.54 cm).

For affording gap-filling capabilities, it is preferred that core member **52** is provided to be complaint over a wide range of temperatures, and to exhibit good compression-relaxation hysteresis even after repeated cyclings or long compressive dwells. Core member **52** therefore may be formed of a foamed elastomeric thermoplastic such as a polyethylene, polypropylene, polypropylene-EPDM blend, butadiene, styrene-butadiene, nitrile, chlorosulfonate, or a foamed neoprene, urethane, or silicone. Preferred materials of construction include open or closed cell urethanes or blends such as a polyolefin resin/monoolefin copolymer blend, or a neoprene, silicone, or nitrile sponge rubber.

Core member **52** may be provided as an extruded or molded foam profile over which shielding material **10** is wrapped as a sheathed, with the edges of sheathed being overlapped as at **56**. In a preferred construction, shielding material **10** is bonded to the core member **52** in a continuous molding process wherein the foam is blown or expanded

within the shielding material. As may be seen best with reference to the magnified view of FIG. **4** referenced at **60** in FIG. **5**, in such construction coating member **14** is disposed adjacent core member **52** as an interior surface, **62**, of shielding member **10**, with the uncoated side **16** of fabric member **12** being oppositely disposed as an electrically-conductive exterior surface, **64**, of the gasket **50**. It will be appreciated that the coated interior surface **62** blocks the pores **22** (FIG. **3**) of the fabric member **12** of the fabric to retain the blown foam therein without penetrate or bleed through to the exterior gasket surface **64**. Depending upon the respective compositions of the foam and coating, the interior surface **62** may function, moreover, as a compatibilizing or "tie" interlayer which promotes the bonding of the foam to the fabric. Gasket construction **50** advantageously provides a structure that may be used in very low closure force, i.e. less than about 1 lb/inch (0.175 N/mm), applications.

Referring again to FIG. **4**, an adhesive layer, **70**, may be applied along the lengthwise extent of gasket **50** to the underside of exterior surface **64** for the attachment of the gasket to a substrate. Such layer **70** preferably is formulated to be of a pressure sensitive adhesive (PSA) variety. As is described in U.S. Pat. No. 4,988,550, suitable PSA's for EMI shielding applications include formulations based on silicones, neoprene, styrene butadiene copolymers, acrylics, acrylates, polyvinyl ethers, polyvinyl acetate copolymers, polyisobutylenes, and mixtures, blends, and copolymers thereof. Acrylic-based formulations, however, generally are considered to be preferred for the EMI applications of the type herein involved. Although PSA's are preferred for adhesive layer **70**, other adhesives such as epoxies and urethanes may be substituted and, accordingly, are to be considered within the scope of the present invention. Heat-fusible adhesives such a hot-melts and thermoplastic films additionally may find applicability.

Inasmuch as the bulk conductivity of gasket **50** is determined substantially through its surface contact with the substrate, an electrically-conductive PSA may be preferred to ensure optimal EMI shielding performance. Such adhesives conventionally are formulated as containing about 1–25% by weight of a conductive filler to yield a volume resistivity of from about 0.01–0.001 Ω-cm. The filler may be incorporated in the form of particles, fibers, flakes, microspheres, or microballoons, and may range in size of from about 1–100 microns. Typically filler materials include inherently conductive material such as metals, carbon, and graphite, or nonconductive materials such as plastic or glass having a plating of a conductive material such as a noble metal or the like. In this regard, the means by which the adhesive is rendered electrically conductive is not considered to be a critical aspect of the present invention, such that any means achieving the desired conductivity and adhesion are to be considered suitable.

For protecting the outer portion of adhesive layer **70** which is exposed on the exterior surface of the gasket, a release sheets, shown at **72**, may be provided as removably attached to the exposed adhesive. As is common in the adhesive art, release sheet **72** may be provided as strip of a waxed, siliconized, or other coated paper or plastic sheet or the like having a relatively low surface energy so as to be removable without appreciable lifting of the adhesive from the exterior surface **64**.

In the production of commercial quantities of the EMI shielding material **10** of the present invention, the viscosity adjusted and otherwise modified acrylic latex emulsion or other resin composition may be coated and cured on one side

the fabric member **12** by a direct wet process such as knife over roll or slot die. With whatever process is employed, the hydrodynamic pressure of the resin composition is controlled in accordance with the precepts of the present invention to delimit the penetration of the resin layer to a depth which is less than the thickness dimension of the fabric member. For example, and with reference to FIG. **6** wherein the head of a representative gravity-fed knife over roll coater is shown somewhat schematically at **100**, porous, i.e., permeable, fabric member **12** is conveyed from a feed roll or the like (not shown) over a nip roller, **102**, which rotates in the direction referenced by arrow **104**. With the first side **16** of fabric member **12** supported on roller **102**, the fabric second side **18** is passed beneath the opening, referenced at **106**, of a coating trough, **108**. Trough **108** is defined by a front plate, **10**, a back plate, **112**, and a pair of side plates (not shown).

The emulsion or other fluent resin composition, referenced at **114**, is pumped or otherwise transported into trough **108** which is filled to a fluid level, referenced at h. For a given fluid density, this level h is controlled such that the hydrodynamic pressure at the fabric-liquid interface is maintained within preset limits. For example, with a fluid density of about 10 pounds per gallon (1.8 g/cm^3), and a fabric having a porosity of about 1000–2000 openings per inch with a mean average pore size of between about 0.5–2 mils (12.5–50 μm), the fluid level H is controlled at about 4 inches (10 cm) to yield a hydrodynamic pressure of about 0.05 psi (0.35 kPa) at the fabric-liquid interface. For other coating processes, the hydrodynamic fluid pressure may be controlled, for example, by a pumping pressure or the like.

In the illustrative knife-over-roll coating process, the lower edge, **120**, of front plate **110** defines a knife surface which is shimmed or otherwise spaced-apart a predetermined distance from the second side **18** of fabric member **12**. Such spacing provides a clearance or gap, referenced at "g," of typically about 10 mils (0.25 mm), but which is adjustable to regulate the thickness of the liquid coating layer, **122**, being applied to the fabric member. From roller **104**, the coated fabric member **12** may be conveyed via a take-up roller arrangement (not shown) through a in-line oven or the like to dry or flash the water or other diluent in the liquid coating layer **122**, or to otherwise cure the liquid coating layer **122** in developing an adherent, tack-free, film or other layer of coating member **14** (FIG. **1**) on the single side **18** of fabric member **12**.

The Example to follow, wherein all percentages and proportions are by weight unless otherwise expressly indicated, is illustrative of the practicing of the invention herein involved, but should not be construed in any limiting sense.

EXAMPLE

Representative EMI shielding materials according to the present invention were constructed for characterization. In this regard, a master batch of a flame retardant coating composition was compounded using an acrylic latex emulsion (Heveatex "4129FR"). The viscosity of the emulsion was adjusted to a Brookfield viscosity (#4 spindle, 40 speed) of about 60,000 cps with about 5wt % of an acryloid thickener (Acrysol™GS, Monsanto Colo., St. Louis, Mo.). The modified emulsion had a total solids content of about 60% by weight, a density of about 10 pounds per gallon (1.8 g/lcm^3), and a pH of between about 7.5 and 9.5.

The emulsion was applied using a knife over roll coater (JETZONE Model 7319, Wolverine Corp., Merrimac,

Mass.) to one side of a silver-plated nylon fabric (Swift "31EN RIPSTOP") having a thickness of about 4 mils (0.1 mm). With the fluid level in the coating trough of the coater maintained at about 4 inch (10 cm), the emulsion was delivered to the surface of the cloth at a hydrodynamic pressure of about 0.05 psi (0.35 kPa). The coating knife was shimmed to a 10 mil (0.25 mm) gap above the fabric to yield a wet coating draw down thickness of about 10 mils. Following an oven curing at 100–125° C. for 5 minutes, a dried coating or film thickness of about 2.5 mils (0.635 mm) was obtained with a weight pickup of about 130–145 g/yd^2 and a total material thickness of between about 6–7 mils (0.15–0.18 mm). An inspection of the coated fabric cloth revealed a coating penetration depth of about 1–2 mils (0.02–0.05 mm) providing acceptable mechanical retention and/or adhesion of the coating onto the fabric surface. The opposite side of the fabric, however, was observed to be substantially coating free, and to retain a surface resistivity of about 0.1 Ω/sq for unaffected EMI shielding effectiveness.

Fabric samples similarly coated in the manner described were subjected to an in-house vertical flame test. No burning was observed at dried film thickness of 2, 3, or 4 mils (0.05, 0.08, 0.10 mm). Accordingly, a reasonable operating window of film thickness was suggested for production runs.

Samples also were provided, as jacketed over a polyurethane foam core in an EMI shielding gasket construction, for flame testing by Underwriters Laboratories, Inc., Melville, N.Y. A flame class rating of V-0 under UL94 was assigned at a minimum thickness of 1.0 mm. The gasket construction therefore was found to be compliant with the applicable UL requirements, and was approved to bear the "UL" certification mark.

The foregoing results confirm that the EMI shielding material of the present invention affords UL94 V-0 protection when used as a jacketing in a fabric-over-foam gasket construction. Unexpectedly, it was found that a relatively porous or permeable fabric may be wet coated on one side with a relatively thin, i.e., 2–4 mil (0.05–0.10 mm), coating layer of a flame retardant composition without compromising the electrical surface conductivity of the other side. Such a thin coating layer, while being sufficient to provide UL94 V-0 protection in a conventional fabric-over-foam gasket construction, nonetheless maintains the drapability the fabric and thereby facilitates the fabrication of UL94 V-0 compliant gaskets having complex profiles or narrow cross-sections down to about 1 mm.

As it is anticipated that certain changes may be made in the present invention without departing from the precepts herein involved, it is intended that all matter contained in the foregoing description shall be interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense. All references cited herein are expressly incorporated by reference.

What is claimed is:

1. A flame retardant, electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielding gasket comprising:

a resilient core member extending lengthwise along a central longitudinal axis and having an outer surface extending circumferentially about said longitudinal axis, said core member being formed of a foamed elastomeric material;

an electrically-conductive fabric member surrounding the outer surface of said core member, said fabric member having an interior surface disposed facing the outer surface of said core member and an oppositely-facing, exterior surface, at least the exterior surface being

electrically-conductive and the exterior surface defining with the interior surface a thickness dimension of the fabric member therebetween; and

a flame retardant layer coating at least a portion of the interior surface of said fabric member, said flame retardant layer comprising at least about 50% by dry weight of one or more flame retardant additives and penetrating into said fabric member to a depth which is less than the thickness dimension of said fabric member such that the exterior surface of said fabric member remains electrically-conductive.

2. The gasket of claim **1** wherein said flame retardant layer has a thickness of between about 2–4 mils (0.05–0.10 mm).

3. The gasket of claim **1** wherein said flame retardant layer is formed as a cured film of a flame retardant acrylic latex emulsion.

4. The gasket of claim **1** wherein said fabric member is a metal-plated cloth.

5. The gasket of claim **4** wherein said cloth comprises fibers selected from the group consisting of cotton, wool, silk, cellulose, polyester, polyamide, nylon, and combinations thereof, and said metal is selected from the group

consisting of copper, nickel, silver, nickel-plated-silver, aluminum, tin, and combinations thereof.

6. The gasket of claim **1** wherein said foamed elastomeric material is selected from the group consisting of polyethylenes, polypropylenes, polypropylene-EPDM blends, butadienes, styrene-butadienes, nitriles, chlorosulfonates, neoprenes, urethanes, silicones, and polyolefin resin/monoolefin copolymer blends, and combinations thereof.

7. The gasket of claim **1** wherein said fabric member has a thickness of between about 2–4 mils (0.05–0.10 mm).

8. The gasket of claim **1** wherein said flame retardant layer is effective to afford the gasket a flame class rating of V-0 under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94.

9. The gasket of claim **1** wherein said one or more flame retardant additives are selected from the group consisting of aluminum hydrate, antimony trioxide, phosphate esters, and halogenated compounds.

10. The gasket of claim **1** wherein said flame retardant layer comprises between about 50–83% by dry weight of one or said one or more flame retardant additives.

* * * * *

US006716536B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Bunyan et al.

(10) **Patent No.: US 6,716,536 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent: *Apr. 6, 2004**

(54) **FLAME RETARDANT EMI SHIELDING GASKET**

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

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(63) Continuation of application No. 10/142,803, filed on May 9, 2002, now Pat. No. 6,521,348, which is a continuation of application No. 09/883,785, filed on Jun. 18, 2001, now Pat. No. 6,387,523, which is a continuation of application No. 09/250,338, filed on Feb. 16, 1999, now Pat. No. 6,248,393.

(60) Provisional application No. 60/076,370, filed on Feb. 27, 1998.

(51) **Int. Cl.**[7] **B32B 5/14**; B32B 5/18; H05K 9/00

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **428/457**; 361/818

(58) **Field of Search** 428/457; 361/818

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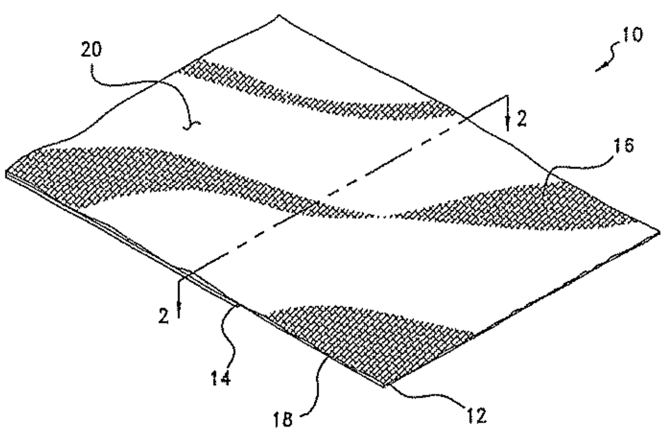
Primary Examiner—Erma Cameron
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—John A. Molnar, Jr.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A flame retardant, electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielding gasket construction. The construction includes a resilient core member formed of a foamed elastomeric material, an electrically-conductive fabric member surrounding the outer surface of the core member, and a flame retardant layer coating at least a portion of the interior surface of the fabric member. The flame retardant layer is effective to afford the gasket construction with a flame class rating of V-0 under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94.

9 Claims, 3 Drawing Sheets



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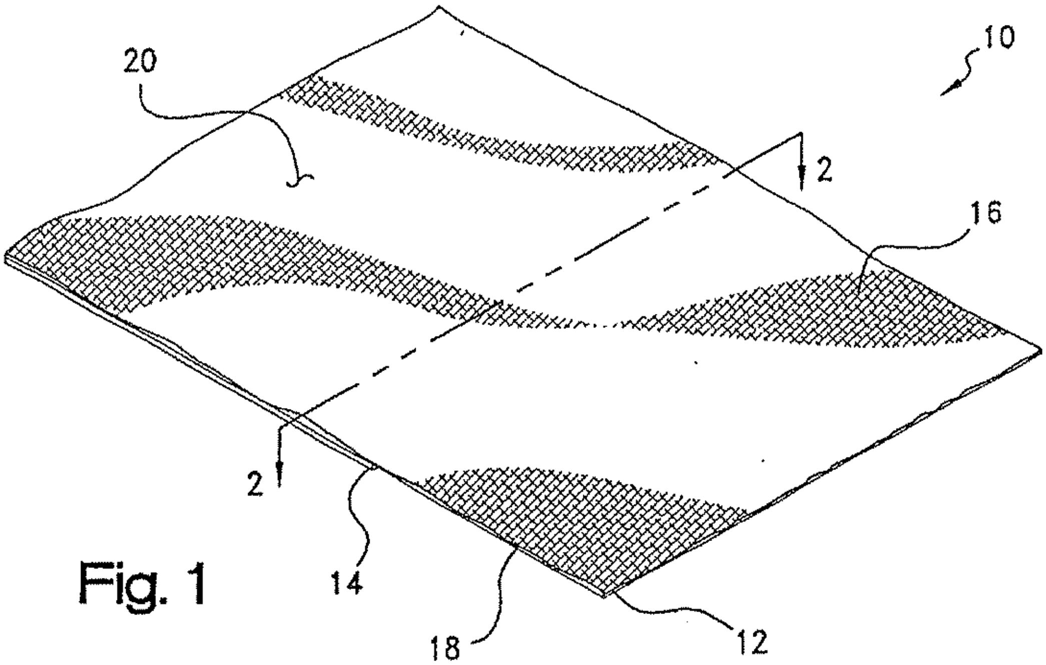

Fig. 1

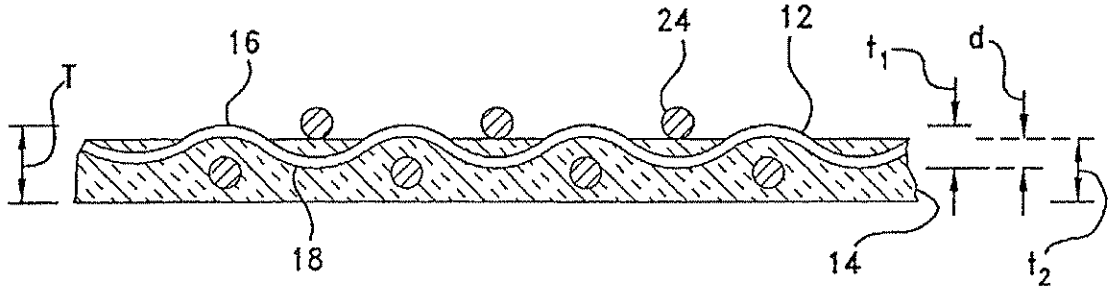

Fig. 2

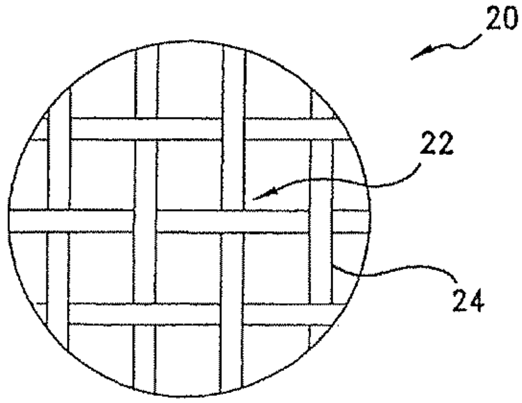

Fig. 3

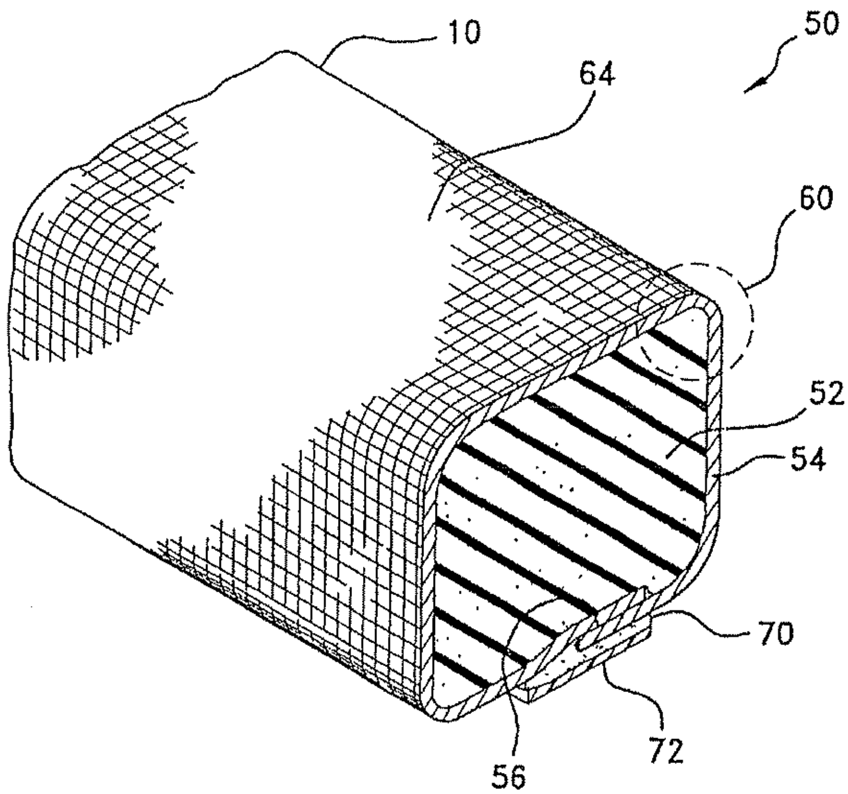

Fig. 4

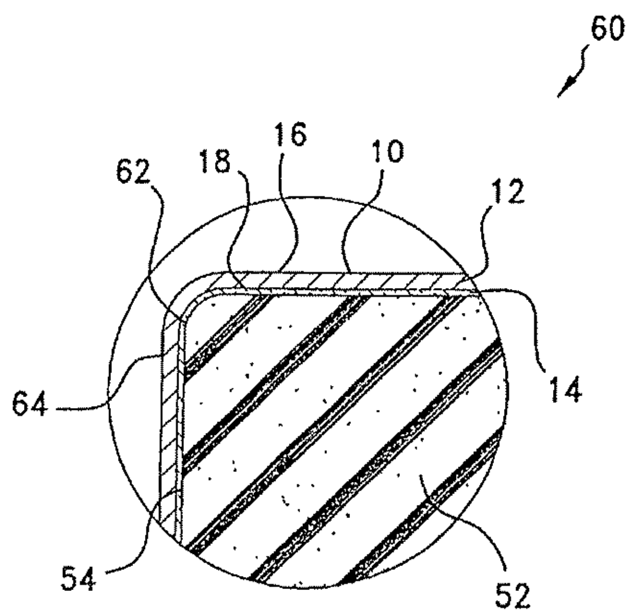

Fig. 5

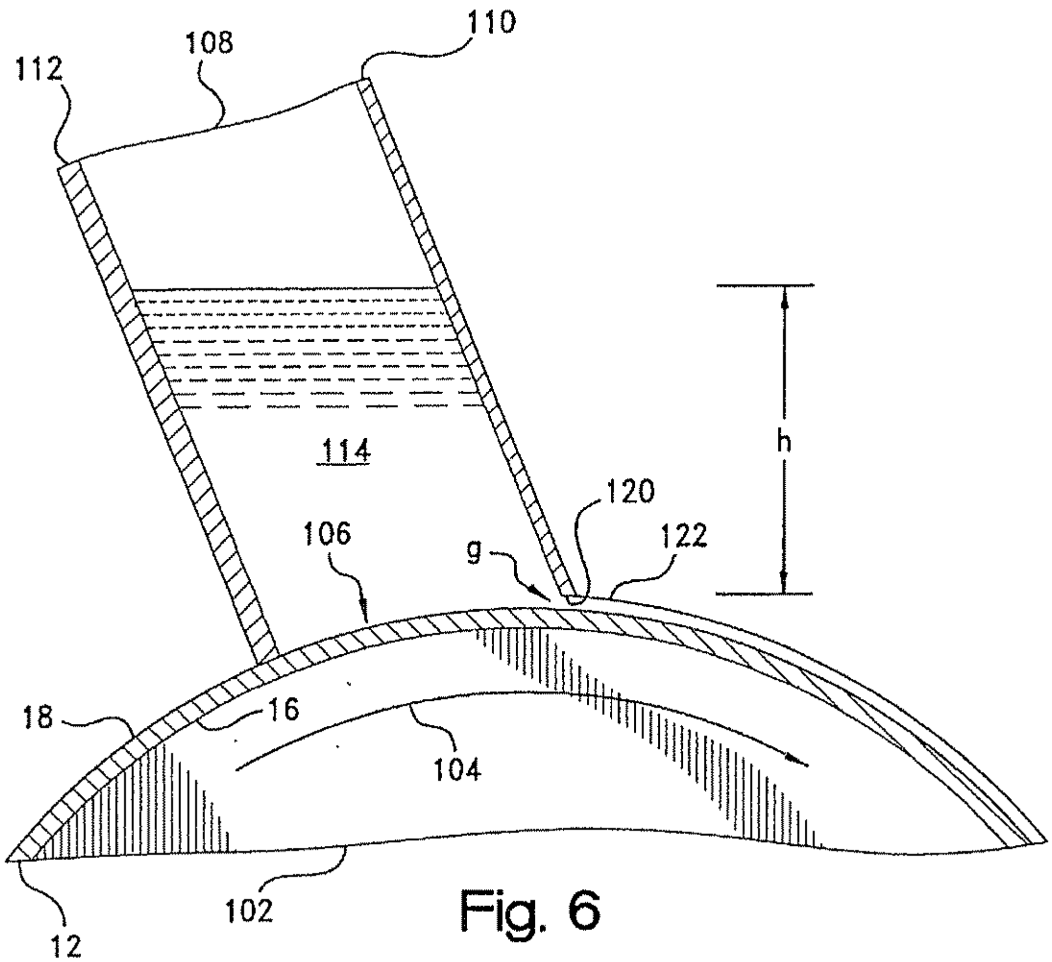

Fig. 6

FLAME RETARDANT EMI SHIELDING GASKET

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 10/142,803 filed May 9, 2002, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,521,348, which is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 09/883,785, filed Jun. 18, 2001, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,387,523; which is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 09/250,338, filed Feb. 16, 1999, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,248,393 and claiming priority to U.S. provisional application Ser. No. 60/076,370, filed Feb. 27, 1998, the disclosure of each of which is expressly incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates broadly to electrically-conductive, flame retardant materials for use in electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielding, and to a method of manufacturing the same, and more particularly to an electrically-conductive fabric having a layer of a flame retardant coating applied to one surface thereof for use as a sheathing within an EMI shielding gasket.

The operation of electronic devices including televisions, radios, computers, medical instruments, business machines, communications equipment, and the like is attended by the generation of electromagnetic radiation within the electronic circuitry of the equipment. Such radiation often develops as a field or as transients within the radio frequency band of the electromagnetic spectrum, i.e., between about 10 KHz and 10 GHz, and is termed "electromagnetic interference" or "EMI" as being known to interfere with the operation of other proximate electronic devices.

To attenuate EMI effects, shielding having the capability of absorbing and/or reflecting EMI energy may be employed both to confine the EMI energy within a source device, and to insulate that device or other "target" devices from other source devices. Such shielding is provided as a barrier which is inserted between the source and the other devices, and typically is configured as an electrically conductive and grounded housing which encloses the device. As the circuitry of the device generally must remain accessible for servicing or the like, most housings are provided with openable or removable accesses such as doors, hatches, panels, or covers. Between even the flattest of these accesses and its corresponding mating or faying surface, however, there may be present gaps which reduce the efficiency of the shielding by presenting openings through which radiant energy may leak or otherwise pass into or out of the device. Moreover, such gaps represent discontinuities in the surface and ground conductivity of the housing or other shielding, and may even generate a secondary source of EMI radiation by functioning as a form of slot antenna. In this regard, bulk or surface currents induced within the housing develop voltage gradients across any interface gaps in the shielding, which gaps thereby function as antennas which radiate EMI noise. In general, the amplitude of the noise is proportional to the gap length, with the width of the gap having a less appreciable effect.

For filling gaps within mating surfaces of housings and other EMI shielding structures, gaskets and other seals have been proposed both for maintaining electrical continuity across the structure, and for excluding from the interior of the device such contaminates as moisture and dust. Such seals are bonded or mechanically attached to, or press-fit

into, one of the mating surfaces, and function to close any interface gaps to establish a continuous conductive path thereacross by conforming under an applied pressure to irregularities between the surfaces. Accordingly, seals intended for EMI shielding applications are specified to be of a construction which not only provides electrical surface conductivity even while under compression, but which also has a resiliency allowing the seals to conform to the size of the gap. The seals additionally must be wear resistant, economical to manufacture, and capability of withstanding repeated compression and relaxation cycles. For further information on specifications for EMI shielding gaskets, reference may be had to Severinsen, J., "Gaskets That Block EMI," Machine Design, Vol. 47, No. 19, pp. 74–77 (Aug. 7, 1975).

Requirements for typical EMI shielding applications often dictate a low impedance, low profile gasket which is deflectable under normal closure force loads. Other requirements include low cost and a design which provides an EMI shielding effectiveness for both the proper operation of the device and compliance, in the United States, with commercial Federal Communication Commission (FCC) EMC regulations.

A particularly economical gasket construction, which also requires very low closure forces, i.e. less than about 1 lb/inch (0.175 N/mm), is marketed by the Chomerics Division of Parker-Hannifin Corp., Woburn, Mass. under the tradename "Soft-Shield® 5000 Series." Such construction consists of an electrically-conductive jacket or sheathing which is "cigarette" wrapped lengthwise over a polyurethane or other foam core. As is described further in U.S. Pat. No. 4,871,477, polyurethane foams generally are produced by the reaction of polyisocyanate and a hydroxyl-functional polyol in the presence of a blowing agent. The blowing agent effects the expansion of the polymer structure into a multiplicity of open or closed cells.

The jacket is provided as a highly conductive, i.e., about 1 Ω-sq., nickel-plated-silver, woven rip-stop nylon which is self-terminating when cut. Advantageously, the jacket may be bonded to the core in a continuous molding process wherein the foam is blown or expanded within the jacket as the jacket is wrapped around the expanding foam and the foam and jacket are passed through a die and into a traveling molding. Similar gasket constructions are shown in commonly-assigned U.S. Pat. No. 5,028,739 and in U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,857,668; 5,054,635; 5,105,056; and 5,202,536.

Many electronic devices, including PC's and communication equipment, must not only comply with certain FCC requirements, but also must meet be approved under certain Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) standards for flame retardancy. In this regard, if each of the individual components within an electronic device is UL approved, then the device itself does not require separate approval. Ensuring UL approval for each component therefore reduces the cost of compliance for the manufacturer, and ultimately may result in cheaper goods for the consumer. For EMI shielding gaskets, however, such gaskets must be made flame retardant, i.e., achieving a rating of V-0 under UL Std. No. 94, "Tests for Flammability of Plastic Materials for Parts in Devices and Appliances" (1991), without compromising the electrical conductivity necessary for meeting EMI shielding requirements.

In this regard, and particularly with respect to EMI shielding gaskets of the above-described fabric over foam variety, it has long been recognized that foamed polymeric materials are flammable and, in certain circumstances, may

present a fire hazard. Owing to their cellular structure, high organic content, and surface area, most foam materials are subject to relatively rapid decomposition upon exposure to fire or high temperatures.

One approach for imparting flame retardancy to fabric over foam gaskets has been to employ the sheathing as a flame resistant protective layer for the foam. Indeed, V-0 rating compliance purportedly has been achieved by sheathing the foam within an electrically-conductive Ni/Cu-plated fabric to which a thermoplastic sheet is hot nipped or otherwise fusion bonding to the underside thereof. Such fabrics, which may be further described in one or more of U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,489,126; 4,531,994; 4,608,104; and/or 4,621,013, have been marketed by Monsanto Co., St. Louis, under the tradename "Flectron® Ni/Cu Polyester Taffeta V0."

Other fabric over foam gaskets, as is detailed in U.S. Pat. No. 4,857,668, incorporate a supplemental layer or coating applied to the interior surface of the sheath. Such coating may be a flame-retardant urethane formulation which also promotes the adhesion of the sheath to the foam. The coating additionally may function to reduce bleeding of the foam through the fabric which otherwise could compromise the electrical conductivity of the sheath.

In view of the foregoing, it will be appreciated that further improvements in the design of flame retardant, fabric-over foam EMI shielding gaskets, as well as sheathing materials therefore, would be well-received by the electronics industry. Especially desired would be a flame retardant gasket construction which achieves a UL94 rating of V-0.

BROAD STATEMENT OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to an electrically-conductive, flame retardant material for use in fabric-over-foam EMI shielding gaskets, and to a method of manufacturing the same. In having a layer of a flame retardant coating applied to one side of an electrically-conductive, generally porous fabric, the material of the invention affords UL94 V-0 protection when used as a jacketing in a fabric-over-foam gasket construction. Advantageously, as the flame retardant layer may be wet coated on the fabric without appreciable bleed through, a relatively thin, i.e., 2–4 mil (0.05–0.10 mm), coating layer may be provided on one fabric side without compromising the electrical surface conductivity of the other side. Such a thin coating layer, while being sufficient to provide UL94 V-0 protection, nonetheless maintains the drapability the fabric and thereby facilitates the construction UL94 V-0 compliant gaskets having complex profiles or narrow cross-sections down to about 1 mm.

In a preferred embodiment, the electrically-conductive, flame retardant EMI shielding material of the invention includes a nickel or silver-plated, woven nylon, polyester, or like fabric on one side of which is wet coated a layer of a flame retardant, acrylic latex emulsion or other fluent resin composition. In accordance with the precepts of the method of the invention, the viscosity and hydrodynamic pressure of the emulsion are controlled such that the coating does not penetrate or otherwise "bleed through" the uncoated side of the fabric. The surface conductivity of the opposite side of the fabric therefore is not compromised in EMI shielding applications.

The material of the invention may be employed as a jacket in fabric-over-foam EMI shielding gasket constructions, and is particularly adapted for use in the continuous molding process for such gaskets. As used within such process, the

fabric may be wrapped around the foam as a jacket with coated side thereof being disposed as an interior surface adjacent the foam, and the uncoated side being disposed as an electrically-conductive exterior surface. Advantageously, the coating on the interior surface of the jacket blocks the pores of the fabric to retain the foam therein without penetrate or bleed through to the exterior surface. In being formed of a acrylic material, the coated interior surface of the jacket may function, moreover, depending upon the composition of the foam, as a compatibilizing or "tie" interlayer which promotes the bonding of the foam to the fabric.

The present invention, accordingly, comprises material and method possessing the construction, combination of elements, and arrangement of parts and steps which are exemplified in the detailed disclosure to follow. Advantages of the present invention include a flame retardant yet drapable EMI shielding fabric. Additional advantages include an economical, flame retardant EMI shielding fabric construction wherein a relatively thin layer of a flame retardant coating may be wet coated onto one side of an electrically-conductive, woven or other generally porous EMI shielding fabric without compromising the conductivity of the other side of the fabric. These and other advantages will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art based upon the disclosure contained herein.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a fuller understanding of the nature and objects of the invention, reference should be had to the following detailed description taken in connection with the accompanying drawings wherein:

FIG. **1** is a perspective view of one embodiment of an EMI shielding material according to the present invention which material includes a generally planar fabric member on one side of which is coated a layer of a flame retardant composition, the view being shown with portions being broken away to better reveal the structure of the material;

FIG. **2** is an enlarged cross-sectional view of the EMI shielding material of FIG. **1** taken through plane represented by line **2**—**2** of FIG. **1**;

FIG. **3** is a top view of the material of FIG. **1** which is magnified to reveal the structure of the fabric member thereof;

FIG. **4** is a perspective cross-sectional view of a length of a representative EMI shielding gasket construction according to the present invention including a jacket which is formed of the EMI shielding material of FIG. **1**;

FIG. **5** is an end view of the gasket of FIG. **4** which is magnified to reveal the structure thereof, and

FIG. **6** is a schematic, partially cross-sectional view of an illustrative gravity-fed, knife over roll coater as adapted for use in the manufacture of the EMI shielding material of FIG. **1**.

The drawings will be described further in connection with the following Detailed Description of the Invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Certain terminology may be employed in the description to follow for convenience rather than for any limiting purpose. For example, the terms "upper" and "lower" designate directions in the drawings to which reference is made, with the terms "inner" or "interior" and "outer" or "exterior" referring, respectively, to directions toward and away from

the center of the referenced element, and the terms "radial" and "axial" referring, respectively, to directions perpendicular and parallel to the longitudinal central axis of the referenced element. Terminology of similar import other than the words specifically mentioned above likewise is to be considered as being used for purposes of convenience rather than in any limiting sense.

For the illustrative purposes of the discourse to follow, the electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielding material herein involved is described in connection with its use as a flame retardant, electrically-conductive jacket for a foam core, EMI shielding gasket as may be adapted to be received within an interface, such as between a door, panel, hatch, cover, or other parting line of an electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielding structure. The EMI shielding structure may be the conductive housing of a computer, communications equipment, or other electronic device or equipment which generates EMI radiation or is susceptible to the effects thereof. The gasket may be bonded or fastened to, or press-fit into one of a pair of mating surfaces which define the interface within the housing, and functions between the mating surfaces to seal any interface gaps or other irregularities. That is, while under an applied pressure, the gasket resiliently conforms to any such irregularities both to establish a continuous conductive path across the interface, and to environmentally seal the interior of the housing against the ingress of dust, moisture, or other contaminates. It will be appreciated, however, that aspects of the present invention may find utility in other EMI shielding applications. Use within those such other applications therefore should be considered to be expressly within the scope of the present invention.

Referring then to the figures, wherein corresponding reference characters are used to designate corresponding elements throughout the several views, a flame retardant EMI shielding material according to the present invention is shown generally at **10** in FIG. **1** as generally adapted for use as a jacket within for a foam core gasket construction. For purposes of illustration, material sheet **10** is shown to be of indefinite dimensions which may be cut to size for the particular application envisioned. In basic construction, material **10** includes an upper, generally planar and porous fabric member, **12**, and a lower, flame retardant coating member, **14**.

Fabric member has at least an electrically-conductive first side, **16**, and a conductive or non-conductive second side, **18**, defining a thickness dimension, referenced at "t," in the cross-sectional view of FIG. **2**, which may vary from about 2–4 mils (0.05–0.10 mm). By "electrically-conductive," it is meant that the fabric may be rendered conductive, i.e., to a surface resistivity of about 0.1 Ω/sq. or less, by reason of its being constructed of electrically-conductive wire, monofilaments, yarns or other fibers or, alternatively, by reason of a treatment such as a plating or sputtering being applied to non-conductive fibers to provide an electrically-conductive layer thereon. Preferred electrically-conductive fibers include Monel nickel-copper alloy, silver-plated copper, nickel-clad copper, Ferrex® tin-plated copper-clad steel, aluminum, tin-clad copper, phosphor bronze, carbon, graphite, and conductive polymers. Preferred non-conductive fibers include cotton, wool, silk, cellulose, polyester, polyamide, nylon, and polyimide monofilaments or yarns which are rendered electrically conductive with a metal plating of copper, nickel, silver, nickel-plated-silver, aluminum, tin, or an alloy thereof. As is known, the metal plating may applied to individual fiber strands or to the surfaces of the fabric after weaving, knitting, or other fabrication.

While fabrics such as wire meshes, knits, and non-woven cloths and webs may find application, a preferred fabric construction for member **12** is a plain weave nylon or polyester cloth which is made electrically conductive with between about 20–40% by weight based on the total fabric weight, i.e., 0.01–0.10 g/in^2, of a silver, nickel-silver, or silver-nickel over copper plating. As may be seen in the magnified view of FIG. **1** referenced at **20** in FIG. **3**, such cloth is permeable in having a plain, generally square weave pattern with pores or openings, one of which is referenced at **22**, being defined between the fibers which are represented schematically at **24**. Fibers **24** may be yarns, monofilaments or, preferably, bundles of from about 10–20 filaments or threads, each having a diameter of between about 10–50 μm. For example, with fibers **24** each being a bundle of such threads with a thread count of between about 1000–3000 per inch and a weave count of between about 1000–1500 per inch, 1000–2000 openings per inch will be defined with a mean average pore size of between about 0.5–2 mils (12.5–50 μm).

Although a plain, square weave pattern such as a taffeta, tabby, or ripstop is considered preferred, other weaves such as satins, twills, and the like also should be considered within the scope of the invention herein involved. A particularly preferred cloth for fabric member **12** is a 4 mil (0.10 mm) thick, 1.8 oz/yd^2 weight, silver-plated, woven nylon which is marketed commercially under the designation "31EN RIPSTOP" by Swift Textile Metalizing Corp., Bloomfield, Conn. However, depending upon the needs of the specific shielding application, a fabric constructed of a combination or blend of conductive and nonconductive fibers alternatively may be employed. Examples of fabrics woven, braided, or warp knitted from electrically-conductive fibers, or from blends of conductive and non-conductive fibers, are described in Gladfelter, U.S. Pat. No. 4,684,762, and in Buonanno, U.S. Pat. No. 4,857,668.

Returning to FIGS. **1** and **2**, coating member **14** preferably is formed from a curable layer of a fluent, flame retardant resin or other composition which is wet coated onto the second side **18** of fabric member **12**. As is detailed hereinafter, the viscosity and hydrodynamic pressure of the resin composition are controlled in accordance with the precepts of the present invention to delimit the penetration of the resin layer to a depth, referenced at "d" in FIG. **2**, which is less than the thickness dimension t_1 of the fabric member **12**. In this regard, when the layer is cured to form the flame retardant surface coating member **14** on the second side **18** of fabric member **12**, the first side **16** thereof remains electrically-conductive. In a preferred construction, the layer is coated to a wet thickness of about 10 mils (0.25 mm), and then cured to a dried coating or film thickness, referenced at t_2 in FIG. **2**, of between about 2–4 mils (0.05–0.10 mm) at a depth d of about 1–2 mils (0.025–0.05 mm). Ultimately, a total material thickness, referenced at "T," of between about 6–7 mils (0.15–0.20 mm) and a dried weight pickup of between about 100–150 g/yd^2 are observed. By "cured" it is meant that the resin is polymerized, cross-linked, further cross-linked or polymerized, vulcanized, hardened, dried, volatilized, or otherwise chemically or physically changed from a liquid or other fluent form into a solid polymeric or elastomeric phase.

The flame retardant composition preferably is formulated as an aqueous emulsion of an acrylic latex emulsion which is adjusted to a total solids of about 60% and a Brookfield viscosity (#5 spindle, 4 speed) of between about 40,000–60,000 cps, at a density of about 10 lbs per gallon (1.8 g/cm^3). Flame retardancy may be imparted by loading the emulsion

with between about 30–50% by weight of one or more conventional flame retardant additives such as aluminum hydrate, antimony trioxide, phosphate esters, or halogenated compounds such as polybrominated diphenyl oxides. A preferred formulation is a mixture of about 25% by weight, based on the total weight of the emulsion, of decambromodiphenyl oxide and about 15% by weight of one or more antimony compounds. In operation, should the acrylic carrier phase be ignited, the decomposition of the halogenated and metal oxide compounds function to chemically deprive the flame of sufficient oxygen to support combustion. The decomposition of the acrylic phase additionally may lead to the development of a protective, i.e., thermally-insulative or refractory, outer char layer.

A preferred flame retardant, acrylic latex emulsion is marketed commercially by Heveatex Corp., Fall River, Mass., under the designation "4129FR." The viscosity of the emulsion may be adjusted to between about 40,000–60,000 cps using an aqueous acryloid gel or other acrylic thickener. In this regard, the increased viscosity of the emulsion contributes to delimiting the penetration of the coating layer into the fabric member. However, as this relatively high viscosity may lead to undesirable porosity in the dried film, the emulsion additionally may be modified to reduce air entrapment and bubble formation in the coating layer with up to about 1% by weight of one or more commercial surfactants such as "Bubble Breaker" by Witco Chemical Corp. (Chicago, Ill.) and "Foam Master Antifoam" by Diamond Shamrock, Inc. (San Antonio, Tex.).

As aforementioned, EMI shielding material **10** of the present invention is particularly adapted for use as a flame retardant, electrically-conductive jacket which is provided over a foam core in an EMI shielding gasket construction such as gasket **50** of FIG. **4**. In a representative embodiment, gasket **50** includes an elongate, resilient foam core member, **52**, which may be of an indefinite length. Core member **52** has an outer circumferential surface, **54**, defining the cross-sectional profile of gasket **50** which, for illustrative purposes, is of a generally polygonal, i.e., square or rectangular geometry. Other plane profiles, such as circular, semicircular, or elliptical, or complex profiles may be substituted, however, depending upon the geometry of the interface to be sealed. Core member **12** may be of any radial or diametric extent, but for most applications will have a diametric extent or width of from about 0.25 inch (0.64 cm) to 1 inch (2.54 cm).

For affording gap-filling capabilities, it is preferred that core member **52** is provided to be complaint over a wide range of temperatures, and to exhibit good compression-relaxation hysteresis even after repeated cyclings or long compressive dwells. Core member **52** therefore may be formed of a foamed elastomeric thermoplastic such as a polyethylene, polypropylene, polypropylene-EPDM blend, butadiene, styrene-butadiene, nitrile, chlorosulfonate, or a foamed neoprene, urethane, or silicone. Preferred materials of construction include open or closed cell urethanes or blends such as a polyolefin resin/monoolefin copolymer blend, or a neoprene, silicone, or nitrile sponge rubber.

Core member **52** may be provided as an extruded or molded foam profile over which shielding material **10** is wrapped as a sheathed, with the edges of sheathed being overlapped as at **56**. In a preferred construction, shielding material **10** is bonded to the core member **52** in a continuous molding process wherein the foam is blown or expanded within the shielding material. As may be seen best with reference to the magnified view of FIG. **4** referenced at **60** in FIG. **5**, in such construction coating member **14** is disposed adjacent core member **52** as an interior surface, **62**, of shielding member **10**, with the uncoated side **16** of fabric member **12** being oppositely disposed as an electrically-conductive exterior surface, **64**, of the gasket **50**. It will be appreciated that the coated interior surface **62** blocks the pores **22** (FIG. **3**) of the fabric member **12** of the fabric to retain the blown foam therein without penetrate or bleed through to the exterior gasket surface **64**. Depending upon the respective compositions of the foam and coating, the interior surface **62** may function, moreover, as a compatibilizing or "tie" interlayer which promotes the bonding of the foam to the fabric. Gasket construction **50** advantageously provides a structure that may be used in very low closure force, i.e. less than about 1 lb/inch (0.175 N/mm), applications.

Referring again to FIG. **4**, an adhesive layer, **70**, may be applied along the lengthwise extent of gasket **50** to the underside of exterior surface **64** for the attachment of the gasket to a substrate. Such layer **70** preferably is formulated to be of a pressure sensitive adhesive (PSA) variety. As is described in U.S. Pat. No. 4,988,550, suitable PSA's for EMI shielding applications include formulations based on silicones, neoprene, styrene butadiene copolymers, acrylics, acrylates, polyvinyl ethers, polyvinyl acetate copolymers, polyisobutylenes, and mixtures, blends, and copolymers thereof. Acrylic-based formulations, however, generally are considered to be preferred for the EMI applications of the type herein involved. Although PSA's are preferred for adhesive layer **70**, other adhesives such as epoxies and urethanes may be substituted and, accordingly, are to be considered within the scope of the present invention. Heat-fusible adhesives such a hot-melts and thermoplastic films additionally may find applicability.

Inasmuch as the bulk conductivity of gasket **50** is determined substantially through its surface contact with the substrate, an electrically-conductive PSA may be preferred to ensure optimal EMI shielding performance. Such adhesives conventionally are formulated as containing about 1–25% by weight of a conductive filler to yield a volume resistivity of from about 0.01–0.001 Ω-cm. The filler may be incorporated in the form of particles, fibers, flakes, microspheres, or microballoons, and may range in size of from about 1–100 microns. Typically filler materials include inherently conductive material such as metals, carbon, and graphite, or nonconductive materials such as plastic or glass having a plating of a conductive material such as a noble metal or the like. In this regard, the means by which the adhesive is rendered electrically conductive is not considered to be a critical aspect of the present invention, such that any means achieving the desired conductivity and adhesion are to be considered suitable.

For protecting the outer portion of adhesive layer **70** which is exposed on the exterior surface of the gasket, a release sheets, shown at **72**, may be provided as removably attached to the exposed adhesive. As is common in the adhesive art, release sheet **72** may be provided as strip of a waxed, siliconized, or other coated paper or plastic sheet or the like having a relatively low surface energy so as to be removable without appreciable lifting of the adhesive from the exterior surface **64**.

In the production of commercial quantities of the EMI shielding material **10** of the present invention, the viscosity adjusted and otherwise modified acrylic latex emulsion or other resin composition may be coated and cured on one side the fabric member **12** by a direct wet process such as knife over roll or slot die. With whatever process is employed, the hydrodynamic pressure of the resin composition is con-

trolled in accordance with the precepts of the present invention to delimit the penetration of the resin layer to a depth which is less than the thickness dimension of the fabric member. For example, and with reference to FIG. 6 wherein the head of a representative gravity-fed knife over roll coater is shown somewhat schematically at **100**, porous, i.e., permeable, fabric member **12** is conveyed from a feed roll or the like (not shown) over a nip roller, **102**, which rotates in the direction referenced by arrow **104**. With the first side **16** of fabric member **12** supported on roller **102**, the fabric second side **18** is passed beneath the opening, referenced at **106**, of a coating trough, **108**. Trough **108** is defined by a front plate, **110**, a back plate, **112**, and a pair of side plates (not shown).

The emulsion or other fluent resin composition, referenced at **114**, is pumped or otherwise transported into trough **108** which is filled to a fluid level, referenced at h. For a given fluid density, this level h is controlled such that the hydrodynamic pressure at the fabric-liquid interface is maintained within preset limits. For example, with a fluid density of about 10 pounds per gallon (1.8 g/cm^3), and a fabric having a porosity of about 1000–2000 openings per inch with a mean average pore size of between about 0.5–2 mils (12.5–50 μm), the fluid level H is controlled at about 4 inches (10 cm) to yield a hydrodynamic pressure of about 0.05 psi (0.35 kPa) at the fabric-liquid interface. For other coating processes, the hydrodynamic fluid pressure may be controlled, for example, by a pumping pressure or the like.

In the illustrative knife-over-roll coating process, the lower edge, **120**, of front plate **110** defines a knife surface which is shimmed or otherwise spaced-apart a predetermined distance from the second side **18** of fabric member **12**. Such spacing provides a clearance or gap, referenced at "g," of typically about 10 mils (0.25 mm), but which is adjustable to regulate the thickness of the liquid coating layer, **122**, being applied to the fabric member. From roller **104**, the coated fabric member **12** may be conveyed via a take-up roller arrangement (not shown) through a in-line oven or the like to dry or flash the water or other diluent in the liquid coating layer **122**, or to otherwise cure the liquid coating layer **122** in developing an adherent, tack-free, film or other layer of coating member **14** (FIG. **1**) on the single side **18** of fabric member **12**.

The Example to follow, wherein all percentages and proportions are by weight unless otherwise expressly indicated, is illustrative of the practicing of the invention herein involved, but should not be construed in any limiting sense.

EXAMPLE

Representative EMI shielding materials according to the present invention were constructed for characterization. In this regard, a master batch of a flame retardant coating composition was compounded using an acrylic latex emulsion (Heveatex "4129FR"). The viscosity of the emulsion was adjusted to a Brookfield viscosity (#4 spindle, 40 speed) of about 60,000 cps with about 5 wt % of an acryloid thickener (Acrysol™ GS, Monsanto Co., St. Louis, Mo.). The modified emulsion had a total solids content of about 60% by weight, a density of about 10 pounds per gallon (1.8 g/cm^3), and a pH of between about 7.5 and 9.5.

The emulsion was applied using a knife over roll coater (JETZONE Model 7319, Wolverine Corp., Merrimac, Mass.) to one side of a silver-plated nylon fabric (Swift "31EN RIPSTOP") having a thickness of about 4 mils (0.1 mm). With the fluid level in the coating trough of the coater maintained at about 4 inch (10 cm), the emulsion was delivered to the surface of the cloth at a hydrodynamic pressure of about 0.05 psi (0.35 kPa). The coating knife was shimmed to a 10 mil (0.25 mm) gap above the fabric to yield a wet coating draw down thickness of about 10 mils. Following an oven curing at 100–125° C. for 5 minutes, a dried coating or film thickness of about 2.5 mils (0.635 mm) was obtained with a weight pickup of about 130–145 g/yd^2 and a total material thickness of between about 6–7 mils (0.15–0.18 mm). An inspection of the coated fabric cloth revealed a coating penetration depth of about 1–2 mils (0.02–0.05 mm) providing acceptable mechanical retention and/or adhesion of the coating onto the fabric surface. The opposite side of the fabric, however, was observed to be substantially coating free, and to retain a surface resistivity of about 0.1 Ω/sq for unaffected EMI shielding effectiveness.

Fabric samples similarly coated in the manner described were subjected to an in-house vertical flame test. No burning was observed at dried film thickness of 2, 3, or 4 mils (0.05, 0.08, 0.10 mm). Accordingly, a reasonable operating window of film thickness was suggested for production runs.

Samples also were provided, as jacketed over a polyurethane foam core in an EMI shielding gasket construction, for flame testing by Underwriters Laboratories, Inc., Melville, N.Y. A flame class rating of V-0 under UL94 was assigned at a minimum thickness of 1.0 mm. The gasket construction therefore was found to be compliant with the applicable UL requirements, and was approved to bear the "UL" certification mark.

The foregoing results confirm that, the EMI shielding material of the present invention affords UL94 V-0 protection when used as a jacketing in a fabric-over-foam gasket construction. Unexpectedly, it was found that a relatively porous or permeable fabric may be wet coated on one side with a relatively thin, i.e., 2–4 mil (0.05–0.10 mm), coating layer of a flame retardant composition without compromising the electrical surface conductivity of the other side. Such a thin coating layer, while being sufficient to provide UL94 V-0 protection in a conventional fabric-over-foam gasket construction, nonetheless maintains the drapability the fabric and thereby facilitates the fabrication of UL94 V-0 compliant gaskets having complex profiles or narrow cross-sections down to about 1 mm.

As it is anticipated that certain changes may be made in the present invention without departing from the precepts herein involved, it is intended that all matter contained in the foregoing description shall be interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense. All references cited herein are expressly incorporated by reference.

What is claimed is:

1. A flame retardant, electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielding gasket comprising:

a resilient core member extending lengthwise along a central longitudinal axis and having an outer surface extending circumferentially about said longitudinal axis, said core member being formed of a foamed elastomeric material;

an electrically-conductive fabric member surrounding the outer surface of said core member, said fabric member having an interior surface disposed facing the outer surface of said core member and an oppositely-facing, exterior surface, at least the exterior surface being electrically-conductive and the exterior surface defining with the interior surface a thickness dimension of the fabric member therebetween; and

a flame retardant layer coating at least a portion of the interior surface of said fabric member, said flame retardant layer comprising at least about 30% by weight of one or more flame retardant additives and penetrating into said fabric member to a depth which is less than the thickness dimension of said fabric member such that the exterior surface of said fabric member remains electrically-conductive.

2. The gasket of claim **1** wherein said flame retardant layer has a thickness of between about 2–4 mils (0.05–0.10 mm).

3. The gasket of claim **1** wherein said flame retardant layer is formed as a cured film of a flame retardant acrylic latex emulsion.

4. The gasket of claim **1** wherein said fabric member is a metal-plated cloth.

5. The gasket of claim **4** wherein said cloth comprises fibers selected from the group consisting of cotton, wool, silk, cellulose, polyester, polyamide, nylon, and combinations thereof, and said metal is selected from the group

consisting of copper, nickel, silver, nickel-plated-silver, aluminum, tin, and combinations thereof.

6. The gasket of claim **1** wherein said foamed elastomeric material is selected from the group consisting of polyethylenes, polypropylenes, polypropylene-EPDM blends, butadienes, styrene-butadienes, nitriles, chlorosulfonates, neoprenes, urethanes, silicones, and polyolefin resin/monoolefin copolymer blends, and combinations thereof.

7. The gasket of claim **1** wherein said fabric member has a thickness of between about 2–4 mils (0.05–0.10 mm).

8. The gasket of claim **1** wherein said flame retardant layer is effective to afford the gasket a flame class rating of V-0 under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94.

9. The gasket of claim **1** wherein said one or more flame retardant additives are selected from the group consisting of aluminum hydrate, antimony trioxide, phosphate esters, and halogenated compounds.

* * * * *

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

#5/a
Ruella 11/29/02

In re Application of Bunyan, *et al.*	)	Examiner E. Cameron
	)	Group Art Unit: 1762
Serial No. 10/142,803	)	
Filed: May 9, 2002	)	November 13, 2002
For: Flame Retardant EMI Shielding Gasket	)	Cleveland, Ohio 44124-4141

COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20231

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE

Responsive to the Office Action mailed August 9, 2002 (Paper No. 3), please amend the above-identified application as follows:

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend claim 1 as follows:

1. (Amended) A flame retardant, electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielding gasket comprising:

a resilient core member <u>which is not V-0 rated under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94</u> extending lengthwise along a central longitudinal axis and having an outer surface extending circumferentially about said longitudinal axis, said core member being formed of a foamed elastomeric material;

an electrically-conductive fabric member surrounding the outer surface of said core member, said fabric member having an interior surface disposed facing the outer surface of said core member and an oppositely-facing, exterior surface<u>, at least the exterior surface being electrically-conductive and the exterior surface defining with the interior surface a thickness dimension of the fabric member therebetween</u>; and

a flame retardant layer coating at least a portion of the interior surface of said fabric member, said flame retardant layer being effective to afford said gasket a flame class rating of V-0 under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94 <u>and penetrating into said fabric member to a depth which is less than the thickness dimension</u>

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of said fabric member such that the exterior surface of said fabric member remains electrically-conductive.

Please amend claim 3 as follows:

3. (Amended) The gasket of claim 1 wherein said flame retardant layer [of] is formed as a cured film of a flame retardant acrylic latex emulsion.

Please add the following new claims:

8. (Newly Added) A flame retardant, electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielding gasket comprising:

a resilient core member extending lengthwise along a central longitudinal axis and having an outer surface extending circumferentially about said longitudinal axis, said core member being formed of a foamed elastomeric material;

an electrically-conductive fabric member surrounding the outer surface of said core member, said fabric member having an interior surface disposed facing the outer surface of said core member and an oppositely-facing, exterior surface, at least the exterior surface being electrically-conductive and the exterior surface defining with the interior surface a thickness dimension of the fabric member therebetween; and

a flame retardant layer coating at least a portion of the interior surface of said fabric member, said flame retardant layer comprising between about 30-50% by weight of one or more flame retardant additives and penetrating into said fabric member to a depth which is less than the thickness dimension of said fabric member such that the exterior surface of said fabric member remains electrically-conductive.

9. (Newly Added) The gasket of claim 8 wherein said flame retardant layer has a thickness of between about 2-4 mils (0.05-0.10 mm).

10. (Newly Added) The gasket of claim 8 wherein said flame retardant layer is formed as a cured film of a flame retardant acrylic latex emulsion.

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11. (Newly Added) The gasket of claim 8 wherein said fabric member is a metal-plated cloth.

12. (Newly Added) The gasket of claim 11 wherein said cloth comprises fibers selected from the group consisting of cotton, wool, silk, cellulose, polyester, polyamide, nylon, and combinations thereof, and said metal is selected from the group consisting of copper, nickel, silver, nickel-plated-silver, aluminum, tin, and combinations thereof.

13. (Newly Added) The gasket of claim 8 wherein said *foamed elastomeric* material is selected from the group consisting of polyethylenes, polypropylenes, polypropylene-EPDM blends, butadienes, styrene-butadienes, nitriles, chlorosulfonates, neoprenes, urethanes, silicones, and polyolefin resin/monoolefin copolymer blends, and combinations thereof.

14. (Newly Added) The gasket of claim 8 wherein said fabric member has a thickness of between about 2-4 mils (0.05-0.10 mm).

15. (Newly Added) The gasket of claim 8 wherein said flame retardant layer is effective to afford the gasket a flame class rating of V-0 under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94.

16. (Newly Added) The gasket of claim 15 wherein said core member is not V-0 rated under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94.

17. (Newly Added) The gasket of claim 8 wherein said core member is not V-0 rated under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94.

18. (Newly Added) The gasket of claim 8 wherein said one or more flame retardant additives are selected from the group consisting of aluminum hydrate, antimony trioxide, phosphate esters, and halogenated compounds.

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REMARKS

Reconsideration of the above-identified application as amended respectfully is solicited on behalf of the Applicants. With the instant response, two (2) claims are amended, and eleven (11) claims are newly added. A clean copy of the amended claims is annexed hereto. A supplemental information disclosure statement and a terminal disclaimer are filed herewith.

Claim 3 has been corrected to comply with 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

Claims 1-7 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph.

As to claim 1, the claim has been amended in the interest of clarity to recite that "at least the exterior surface [of the fabric member is] electrically-conductive and the exterior surface defin[es] with the interior surface a thickness dimension of the fabric member therebetween," and further that the flame retardant layer "penetrat[es] into said fabric member to a depth which is less than the thickness dimension of said fabric member such that the exterior surface of said fabric member remains electrically-conductive."

It is noted that claims 1-7 have been rejected for obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-8 of U.S. Patent No. 6,387,523. In order to materially advance the status of the present prosecution, a terminal disclaimer in compliance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.321(b) is filed herewith. The certification required under 37 C.F.R. § 3.73 accompanies the disclaimer.

As to claim 1 as amended, the claim now recites that the resilient core member is not V0-rated, and instead it is the flame retardant layer which is effective to afford the gasket a V0 rating. Similarly as to newly-added independent claim 8 recites that the flame retardant layer comprises between about 30-50% by weight of one or more flame retardant additives. In this regard, it is believed that the adhesive or other layers previously used in the art were not so highly loaded with flame retardant additives such that a gasket constructed therewith could achieve a UL rating of V0 notwithstanding that the other component parts thereof, namely the core, were not in and of themselves V0 rated. Rather, it is believed that conventional wisdom called for each of the components of the gasket to be V0-rated for achieving an overall gasket construction having a V0 rating. It remained for the instant Applicants, however, to recognize that a V0-rated gasket could be constructed without the core itself having to be V0-rated. Advantageously, Applicants' recognition allows for a flame retardant gasket to be produced having physical properties, such as high compressibility and resistance to compression set, which

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approach those of standard gaskets. In contrast, the V0 gaskets which heretofore may have been known in the art are believed to have exhibited relatively poor physical properties as a result of the core having been highly loaded with the large amount of flame retardant additives necessary to effect a V0 rating for the core.

In view of the foregoing, wherein the claim program is believed to distinguish over the art made of record, the issuance of a Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited on November 13, 2002 with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D.C. 20231.

John A. Molnar, Jr.

Serial No. 10/142,803
Art Unit: 1762

AMENDED CLAIMS

Claim 1 has been amended as follows:

1. (Amended) A *flame retardant, electromagnetic interference* (EMI) shielding gasket comprising:

a resilient core member which is not V-0 rated under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94 extending lengthwise along a central longitudinal axis and having an outer surface extending circumferentially about said longitudinal axis, said core member being formed of a foamed elastomeric material;

an electrically-conductive fabric member surrounding the outer surface of said core member, said fabric member having an interior surface disposed facing the outer surface of said core member and an oppositely-facing, exterior surface, at least the exterior surface being electrically-conductive and the exterior surface defining with the interior surface a thickness dimension of the fabric member therebetween; and

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a flame retardant layer coating at least a portion of the interior surface of said fabric member, said flame retardant layer being effective to afford said gasket a flame class rating of V-0 under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94 and penetrating into said fabric member to a depth which is less than the thickness dimension of said fabric member such that the exterior surface of said fabric member remains electrically-conductive.

Claim 3 has been amended as follows:

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3. (Amended) The gasket of claim 1 wherein said flame retardant layer is formed as a cured film of a flame retardant acrylic latex emulsion.

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Appl. No.	:	10/753,016
Applicant	:	Bunyan, *et al.*
Filed	:	January 7, 2004
Title	:	Flame Retardant EMI Shielding Gasket
TC/A.U.	:	
Examiner	:	
Docket No.	:	2802-257-023

Honorable Commissioner For Patents
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.115

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.115, please amend the above-identified application as follows:

Amendments to the Claims are reflected in the listing of the claims which begins on page 2 of this paper.

Remarks begin on page 4 of this paper.

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A flame retardant, electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielding gasket comprising:

a resilient core member extending lengthwise along a central longitudinal axis and having an outer surface extending circumferentially about said longitudinal axis, said core member being formed of a foamed elastomeric material;

an electrically-conductive fabric member surrounding the outer surface of said core member, said fabric member having an interior surface disposed facing the outer surface of said core member and an oppositely-facing, exterior surface, at least the exterior surface being electrically-conductive and the exterior surface defining with the interior surface a thickness dimension of the fabric member therebetween; and

a flame retardant layer coating at least a portion of the interior surface of said fabric member, said flame retardant layer ~~being effective to afford said gasket a flame class rating of V-0 under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94~~ comprising at least about 50% by dry weight of one or more flame retardant additives and penetrating into said fabric member to a depth which is less than the thickness dimension of said fabric member such that the exterior surface of said fabric member remains electrically-conductive.

Claim 2 (original): The gasket of claim 1 wherein said flame retardant layer has a thickness of between about 2-4 mils (0.05-0.10 mm).

Claim 3 (currently amended): The gasket of claim 1 wherein said flame retardant layer [of] is formed as a cured film of a flame retardant acrylic latex emulsion.

Claim 4 (original): The gasket of claim 1 wherein said fabric member is a metal-plated cloth.

Claim 5 (original): The gasket of claim 4 wherein said cloth comprises fibers selected from the group consisting of cotton, wool, silk, cellulose, polyester, polyamide, nylon, and combinations thereof, and said metal is selected from the group consisting of copper, nickel, silver, nickel-plated-silver, aluminum, tin, and combinations thereof.

Claim 6 (original): The gasket of claim 1 wherein said foamed elastomeric material is selected from the group consisting of polyethylenes, polypropylenes, polypropylene-EPDM blends, butadienes, styrene-butadienes, nitriles, chlorosulfonates, neoprenes, urethanes, silicones, and polyolefin resin/monoolefin copolymer blends, and combinations thereof.

Claim 7 (original): The gasket of claim 1 wherein said fabric member has a thickness of between about 2-4 mils (0.05-0.10 mm).

Claim 8 (new): The gasket of claim 1 wherein said flame retardant layer is effective to afford the gasket a flame class rating of V-0 under Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) Standard No. 94.

Claim 9 (new): The gasket of claim 1 wherein said one or more flame retardant additives are selected from the group consisting of aluminum hydrate, antimony trioxide, phosphate esters, and halogenated compounds.

Claim 10 (new): The gasket of claim 1 wherein said flame retardant layer comprises between about 50-83% by dry weight of one or said one or more flame retardant additives.

REMARKS

Consideration of the above-identified application as amended respectfully is solicited on behalf of the Applicants. With the instant response, 2 claims have been amended and 3 claims have been newly added.

A terminal disclaimer is filed herewith in compliance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.321(b) is filed herewith. The certification required under 37 C.F.R. § 3.73 accompanies the disclaimer.

Claim 1 has been amended in the interest of clarity to recite that "at least the exterior surface [of the fabric member is] electrically-conductive and the exterior surface defin[es] with the interior surface a thickness dimension of the fabric member therebetween," and further that the flame retardant layer "penetrat[es] into said fabric member to a depth which is less than the thickness dimension of said fabric member such that the exterior surface of said fabric member remains electrically-conductive."

Claim 1 also has been amended to recite that the flame retardant layer coating at least a portion of the interior surface of said fabric member, said flame retardant layer comprises at least about 50% by dry weight of one or more flame retardant additives. Support for the amendment may be found at page 10, lines 7-15 of the instant specification as filed, and further in the Example at page 14, lines 23-24.

In this regard, the specification describes the 30-50% range is based on the total weight of the emulsion. With the emulsion having a total solids content of about 60%, such 30-50% range therefore corresponds to a dry weight basis in the dried or otherwise cured film of the layer [*See* Specification, at page 14, lines 4-8], of between about 50-83%. For example, at 60% total solids, 100 parts by total weight of the emulsion contains 30-50 parts of the one or more flame retardant additives, and 60 parts by weight solids. On a solid or dry basis, *i.e.*, with the 40 parts water having been removed, the total weight of the layer is now 60 parts with between about 30-50 parts thereof, *i.e.*, about 50-83%, being the additive composition or concentration.

Claim 3 has been amended to correct an informality.

As the present claim program is believed to properly distinguish over the art of record, an early notice of allowance respectfully is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited on March 10, 2004, with the United Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop Non-Fee Amendment, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450.

John A. Molnar, Jr.